

# ial

## Issues in Applied Linguistics

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### SPECIAL ISSUE

#### DISCOURSE BASED PERSPECTIVES ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

#### ARTICLES

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**Conversations with Vovó: A Case Study of Child Second Language Acquisition and Loss**

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## **Editorial**

### **Discourse Based Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition**

All the research in this volume is "discourse based" in that it views language not only as words and a system of grammatical rules mastered in isolation, but as a set of practices used in interaction. The research here explores those practices by close examination of spoken discourse and builds on the assumption that words and an entire language attain their meaning through the ways in which they are used, and the tasks they are meant to accomplish. These are ideas which are not new to the field of linguistic anthropology, where culture and communication are seen as intimately connected (cf. Duranti, 1994), or conversation analysis, which views conversational practices as the infrastructure of human sociality (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974); Not surprisingly, much of the work in this volume is guided by conversation analytic and linguistic anthropological approaches.

The article by Marianne Celce-Murcia, Zoltán Dörnyei and Sarah Thurrell builds explicitly on Dell Hymes' (1974) notion of "communicative competence" expanding his model to provide a new perspective on second language learning. The resulting multi-leveled theoretical framework suggests rich areas of exploration for second language acquisition research; some examples of such research comprise the rest of this volume.

A discourse-based perspective on second language acquisition reveals that even in the classroom, students learn not only the language and its grammar, but certain kinds of interactional patterns that go with that language. Joan Kelly Hall's discourse analysis in a Spanish foreign language classroom examines the notion of "interactive competence." Her article suggests that, over the course of time, while language skills grow, interactive skills in this particular classroom are actually hindered by the way in which discourse patterns develop in classroom talk. In a similar vein, Numa Markee examines classroom discourse patterns in an ESL class and reveals the classroom-specific, teacher centered nature of question and answer patterns that develop even when students are engaged in "group work." Markee applies conversational analytic methods to L2 classroom discourse, to show how (as Mehan (1979) has for L1 classrooms) L2 teachers and their students orient to the social organization of the classroom, and not to that of natural conversation. As both Markee and Hall reveal, if second language students' only exposure to a second language occurs in the language

classroom, the interactional patterns they learn in the acquisition process may not serve them well in other situations.

The last two articles in this volume focus on how interactional patterns are embedded in larger activities which influence second language acquisition. Amy Snyder Ohta's research in a Japanese foreign language classroom reveals how two students of different levels of linguistic competence aid each other when they work together because the activities they engage in provide an opportunity to use the language for authentic communicative purposes. Peter Coughlan's article examines opportunities for language learning which occur *outside* of the classroom, looking in particular, at phone conversations in Portuguese and English between a young boy and his grandmother. By using the telephone activity as a means to trace the young boy's acquisition of Portuguese and his subsequent loss of this language, Coughlan illustrates how sociocultural factors are crucially tied to bilingualism.

Issues of sociocultural factors and second language acquisition are developed more broadly in Coughlan's interview with James Lantolf. In addition, the book reviews in this volume reflect current interest in language, interaction, and sociocultural factors involved in language acquisition, both in and outside the classroom.

The articles, interview, and book reviews here take a broad sweep across both discourse analysis and second language acquisition research. They are, I believe, the beginning of a more inter-disciplinary approach to second language acquisition which recognizes that language is crucially tied to interaction and culture. In their book, *In Other Words*, Ellen Bialystok and Kenji Hakuta emphasize this need for a recognition of sociocultural factors in second language acquisition research and suggest that "...the sociocultural approach is best regarded as an idea whose time has come, but which requires new methodological canons to be invented" (1994, p. 190). The discourse based perspectives represented in this volume indicate that such canons are in the process of being invented and transforming the shape of second language acquisition research.

Betsy Rymes

December, 1995

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# Communicative Competence: A Pedagogically Motivated Model with Content Specifications

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*This paper argues the need for an updated and explicit description of language teaching areas generated with reference to a detailed model of communicative competence. We describe two existing models of communicative competence and then propose our own pedagogically motivated construct, which includes five components: (1) discourse competence, (2) linguistic competence, (3) actional competence, (4) sociocultural competence, and (5) strategic competence. We discuss these competencies in as much detail as is currently feasible, provide content specifications for each component, and touch on remaining issues and possible future developments.*

## INTRODUCTION

It is reasonable to assume that communicative language teaching (CLT) (Widdowson, 1978; Savignon, 1983, 1990) should be based implicitly or explicitly on some model of *communicative competence* (e.g., Hymes, 1967, 1972). However, with the exception of the work of Canale & Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), there has been no serious endeavor to generate detailed content specifications for CLT that relate directly to an articulated model of communicative competence. Several attempts have, of course, been made to catalogue the content that should be part of a communicative language syllabus (e.g., Wilkins, 1976; van Ek, 1977; Dubin & Olshtain, 1986; van Ek & Trim, 1991), but such content specifications, while being very valuable and influential in the language teaching profession, have not been carried out systematically with reference to any well-defined and comprehensive communicative competence construct. As a result, they have tended to be slightly intuitive and *ad hoc*. Among applied linguists there have been some notable attempts to recast the construct of communicative competence within the context of language assessment (e.g., Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, in preparation), but such

model-building has been carried out with reference to tests of language proficiency rather than to objectives of language instruction.

Given the immediate practical need that many applied linguists and language teachers are experiencing in connection with designing language syllabi and instructional materials as well as assessment instruments in accordance with CLT principles (cf. Savignon, 1990), another attempt to look at models of communicative competence and their content specifications from a pedagogical perspective seems warranted. Our current effort has been motivated by our belief in the potential of a direct, explicit approach to the teaching of communicative skills, which would require a detailed description of what communicative competence entails in order to use the sub-components as a content base in syllabus design.<sup>2</sup> However, we believe, an *informed* approach concerning the objectives of CLT will be conducive to the teaching of communicative language abilities regardless of whether one's philosophy of language teaching/learning favors implicit, indirect language acquisition (e.g., Krashen, 1982) or more explicit, focused language instruction (e.g., Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1985; Spada & Lightbown, 1993; Schmidt, 1990, 1993). A model of communicative competence such as ours does not directly imply anything about *how* teaching should proceed. However, whatever teaching approach one selects, the content must at some point undergo a "pedagogic conversion."

Linguists and applied linguists have not always used the term "competence" in the same way, so a brief discussion of this matter is useful as a preliminary. Taylor (1988) points out that among applied linguists, Stern (1983) equated "competence" with "proficiency" while Savignon (1983) viewed competence as dynamic. In contrast, Taylor notes that linguists like Chomsky (1965 and subsequent work) use "competence" to refer only to rather static knowledge, which excludes any notion of "capacity" or "ability." Like Chomsky, Taylor views "competence" as a state or product, not a process; he distinguishes between "competence" and "proficiency," saying that the latter, which he describes as the ability to make use of competence, is dynamic and relates to process and function. This distinction appears to be similar to that of "declarative" and "procedural knowledge," two terms that applied linguists such as Kasper (1989) and O'Malley & Chamot (1990) have borrowed from cognitive psychology. Taylor further claims that "performance" is what occurs when proficiency is put to use. While we agree that Taylor's distinctions are useful in the abstract, they have proved to be difficult to apply practically in a consistent manner. In spelling out our content specifications for communicative competence, we found that certain competencies (e.g., linguistic competence) are more static, whereas others are more dynamic (e.g., strategic competence). This is a matter we shall return to later.

In this paper we first discuss existing models of communicative competence and then present our own framework containing pedagogically relevant components. In line with the practical purpose of our model, our emphasis has been to provide detailed content specifications for the constituent components.

We are well aware that it is impossible at present to catalogue comprehensively everything known about language that is relevant to language teaching; nor is it possible with such a comprehensive enterprise to claim that we have presented the most up-to-date results in every area, particularly because cutting edge results are often controversial and not tested sufficiently to be able use them confidently as bases for pedagogical exploitation. Thus, a pedagogically motivated model is, in a way, necessarily selective and dated. However, from a practical perspective, we feel that it is worth making this effort in spite of the above reservations in order to inform work currently being done in language teaching curriculum design, materials development and communicative language testing.

There are two further comments we would like to make at the outset. First, our model was developed from an L2 perspective but a great deal of it is assumed to have validity for describing L1 use as well. Second, we acknowledge the seminal work of the late Michael Canale, done in collaboration with Merrill Swain (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). They did much to focus the attention of applied linguists on developing pedagogically relevant and assessment relevant models of communicative competence. We view this paper as our attempt to continue their work.

## EXISTING MODELS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The first comprehensive model of communicative competence, which was intended to serve both instructional and assessment purposes, is that of Canale & Swain (1980), further elaborated by Canale (1983). This model posited four components of communicative competence:

1. *Grammatical competence* - the knowledge of the language code (grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc.).
2. *Sociolinguistic competence* - the mastery of the sociocultural code of language use (appropriate application of vocabulary, register, politeness and style in a given situation).
3. *Discourse competence* - the ability to combine language structures into different types of cohesive texts (e.g., political speech, poetry).
4. *Strategic competence* - the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of communication and, where necessary, enable the learner to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur.

In a critical analysis of the model, Schachter (1990) questioned the validity of the constituent components, and particularly the separation of discourse and sociolinguistic competencies, as the "unity of the text involves appropriateness and depends on contextual factors such as status of the participants, purpose of



the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction" (Schachter, 1990, p. 43). A second, related issue Schachter pointed out concerned the fact that the major components of the communicative competence model were not sufficiently defined, which resulted in an ambiguous operationalization of the theoretical constructs for assessment purposes. This problem was not unique to the particular test (see Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990) Schachter had analyzed; educational testing research has found that 'objectives-based tests' in general fall short of the mark in that the domain specifications, based on behavioral objectives, tend to result in ill-defined domains (Popham, 1990). Thus, in order to achieve content relevance, we need to have a well-defined target domain based on an explicit theoretical construct (cf. also McNamara, in press). Our attempt to provide detailed content specifications of the constituents of communicative competence was motivated partly by similar concerns. However, in spite of criticisms leveled at the Canale & Swain model by Schachter and others, the model has been extremely influential in defining major facets of communicative language use. It has broadened the scope of language instruction and language testing, and has been used as a starting point for many subsequent studies on the issue.

Another model of communicative language abilities has been proposed by Bachman (1990) and Bachman & Palmer (in preparation), as an elaboration of the Canale & Swain model, based on results in language testing research. The latest version of the Bachman & Palmer model (in preparation) divides language knowledge into two main categories, both broken down into subcategories:

## Language Knowledge

1. *Organizational knowledge*—the knowledge of the "components involved in controlling the formal structure of language for producing or recognizing grammatically correct sentences and for ordering these to form texts" (MS. p. 3/13).
  - (a) *Grammatical knowledge*—similar to Canale & Swain's grammatical competence.
  - (b) *Textual knowledge*—similar to but more elaborate than Canale and Swain's discourse competence.
2. *Pragmatic knowledge*—the knowledge of the "components that enable us to relate words and utterances to their meanings, to the intentions of language users and to relevant characteristics of the language use contexts" (MS. p. 3/14).
  - (a) *Lexical knowledge*—the knowledge of the meanings of words and the ability to use figurative language.
  - (b) *Functional knowledge*—the knowledge of the "relationships between utterances and the intentions, or communicative purposes of language users" (MS. p. 3/14).

- (c) *Sociolinguistic knowledge*—similar to Canale & Swain's sociolinguistic competence.

In situational language use *language knowledge* (as described above) interacts with *metacognitive strategies*, which are of three kinds, (a) *assessment*, (b) *goal-setting* and (c) *planning*. Traditionally conceived 'communication strategies' (such as paraphrase or approximation) belong to the third category (planning), which is consistent with the cognitive approach of Færch & Kasper (1984a), who defined these strategies as a subclass of verbal plans.

As McNamara (in press) observes, Bachman (1990) and Bachman & Palmer (in preparation) separate knowledge of/about language from the general cognitive skills involved in language use (referred to by Bachman as "strategic competence" and by Bachman & Palmer as "metacognitive strategies"), which are better understood as ability, or capacity, rather than as knowledge. While McNamara rates Bachman & Palmer's model superior to Canale & Swain's for language testing purposes, partly because of this attempt to distinguish between knowledge and skills—or in Taylor's (1988) terminology, competence and proficiency—he notes that there is still some overlap between Bachman & Palmer's illocutionary/functional component (which is conceived as knowledge) and their strategic component (which is considered to be a kind of processing ability/skill). This issue of the separation of the knowledge and skill dimensions of communicative competence, which also applies to our model, will need to be addressed explicitly in the future.

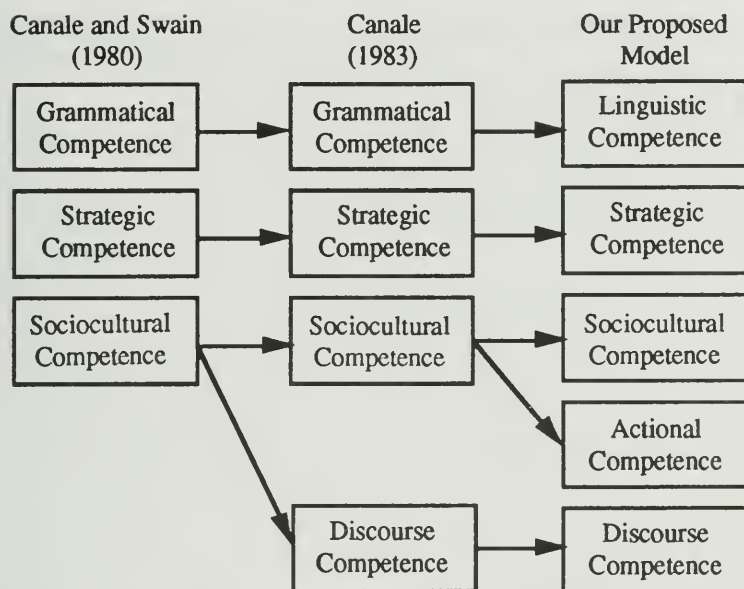
## PROPOSED MODEL OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

We represent our model of communicative competence as a pyramid enclosing a circle and surrounded by another circle (see Figure 1). The circle within the pyramid is *discourse competence*, and the three points of the triangle are *sociocultural competence*, *linguistic competence*, and *actional competence*. This latter competence, an addition to the Canale and Swain model, is conceptualized as competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent by performing and interpreting speech acts and speech act sets (see later for a more detailed discussion). Thus our construct places the discourse component in a position where the lexico-grammatical building blocks, the actional organizing skills of communicative intent, and the sociocultural context come together and shape the discourse, which, in turn, also shapes each of the other three components. The circle surrounding the pyramid represents *strategic competence*, an ever-present, potentially usable inventory of skills that allows a strategically competent speaker to negotiate messages and resolve problems or to compensate for deficiencies in any of the other underlying competencies.



**Figure 1. Schematic Representation of Communicative Competence**

Figure 2 presents the chronological evolution of our model from the Canale and Swain (1980) construct. The figure shows clearly that the main tendency underlying the model's progress has been to elaborate *sociolinguistic competence*. First Canale (1983) separated *discourse competence* from it, and our model further narrows sociolinguistic competence by specifying *actional competence* in its own right. This tendency is understandable from a historical perspective. The term "communicative competence" stems from Hymes' (1967, 1972) challenge to Chomsky's (1965) notion of "linguistic competence" from a sociolinguistic perspective, and therefore originally the sociolinguistic dimension of language proficiency was associated with everything that was missing from linguistic competence. In fact, Canale & Swain (1980) had already begun the process of narrowing down the broad sociolinguistic dimension by separating *strategic competence* from *sociolinguistic competence*.



**Figure 2. Chronological Evolution of the Proposed Model**

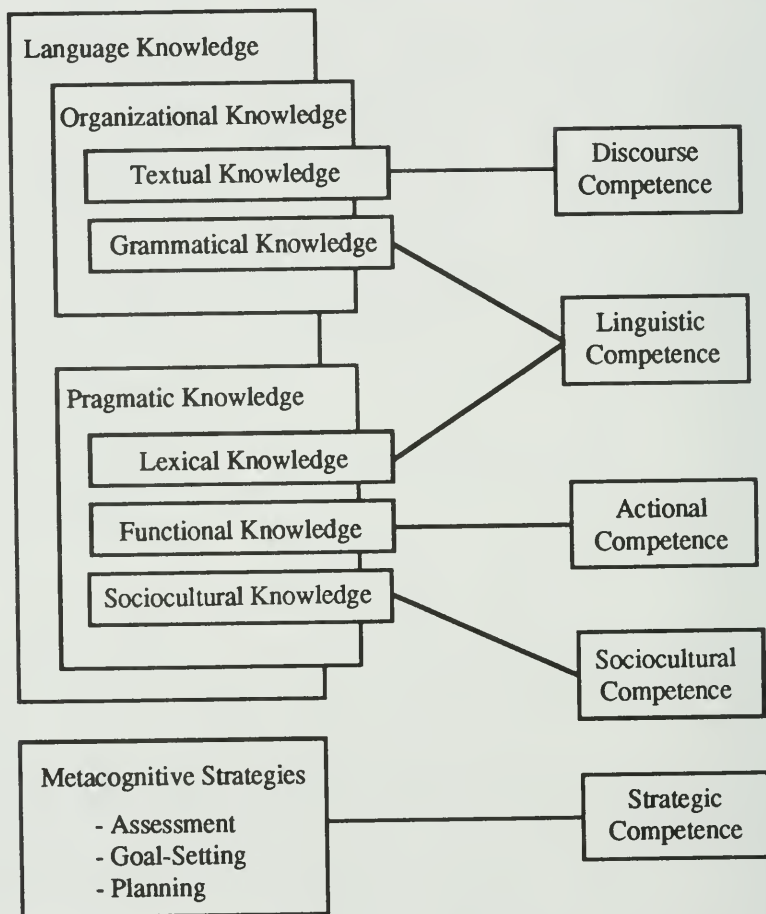
Two minor, terminological differences between our model and Canale and Swain's is first that we have decided to use the term "linguistic competence" rather than "grammatical competence" in order to indicate unambiguously that this component also includes lexis and phonology in addition to morphology and syntax. Second, we use the term "sociocultural competence" rather than "sociolinguistic competence" to better distinguish it from actional competence (since the sociolinguistic dimension of communicative competence has traditionally included contextualized language functions), and also to highlight the fact that language resources are in the linguistic, actional, and discourse components while sociocultural knowledge is necessary for the appropriate deployment of the resources in other components.

Figure 3 provides a schematic comparison of our construct to Bachman & Palmer's (in preparation). Even though their proposal conceptualizes communicative language abilities in a hierarchical, multi-level form, the basic components share many similarities with the five competencies in our construct. The linguistic, discourse and strategic competencies have their more or less straightforward equivalents, even though "metacognitive strategies" in the Bachman & Palmer model entail a broader scope than our strategic component. It is in the pragmatic-sociolinguistic dimension, again, where the differences occur.



Bachman and Palmer (in preparation)

Our Proposed Model



**Figure 3. Comparison of the Proposed Model with Bachman and Palmer's (in Preparation) Model of Communicative Language Abilities**

Bachman & Palmer also consider it necessary to define a separate component centered around communicative purposes and intentions; they call this component "functional knowledge," and it is similar to our actional competence. The difference in labeling reflects our somewhat different perspectives: Bachman & Palmer follow Halliday's (1973) theoretical conception of functional language use (see also Bachman, 1990), whereas our pedagogical approach involves a



more detailed description of speech acts and language functions in the way they were defined by Wilkins (1976) and van Ek (1977).

We also differ from Bachman and Palmer in that our model places "lexical knowledge" within linguistic competence, following Halliday (1985), who, among others, believes that the line between lexicon and grammar cannot be neatly drawn, and that this results in a "lexico-grammar" that is part of linguistic competence (see Larsen-Freeman, 1993; and Celce-Murcia, 1993 for further discussion). In Bachman's (1990) earlier model, vocabulary belonged to grammatical competence, whereas Bachman & Palmer (in preparation) decided to shift lexical knowledge into the pragmatic dimension, highlighting the interdependence of meaning and the sociocultural context (as is displayed prominently in the use of connotations and figurative language). Their current view of lexical knowledge as the realization and interpretation of meaning in context shows similarities to our actional competence, which concerns getting one's (illocutionary) meaning across in actual language use, and is typically associated with a repertoire of conventionalized phrases and routines. The question of lexis, and of formulaic speech in particular, will be discussed in more detail under linguistic competence.

In the following we outline the main components of each of the five competencies in our model in order to make it more applicable to pedagogy. The discussion begins with discourse competence, the core; we then move on to linguistic competence, the most familiar of the five, before treating the actional, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies.

## **Discourse Competence**

Discourse competence concerns the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures, sentences and utterances to achieve a unified spoken or written text. This is where the bottom-up lexico-grammatical microlevel intersects with the top-down signals of the macrolevel of communicative intent and sociocultural context to express attitudes and messages, and to create texts.

There are many sub-areas that contribute to discourse competence: *cohesion*, *deixis*, *coherence*, *generic structure*, and the *conversational structure* inherent to the turn-taking system in conversation (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Suggested Components of Discourse Competence**

---

**COHESION**

- Reference (anaphora, cataphora)
- Substitution/ellipsis
- Conjunction
- Lexical chains (related to content schemata), parallel structure

**DEIXIS**

- Personal (pronouns)
- Spatial (*here, there; this, that*)
- Temporal (*now, then; before, after*)
- Textual (*the following chart; the example above*)

**COHERENCE**

- Organized expression and interpretation of content and purpose (content schemata)
- Thematization and staging (theme-rheme development)
- Management of old and new information
- Propositional structures and their organizational sequences
  - temporal, spatial, cause-effect, condition-result, etc.
- Temporal continuity/shift (sequence of tenses)

**GENRE/GENERIC STRUCTURE (formal schemata)**

- narrative, interview, service encounter, research report, sermon, etc.

**CONVERSATIONAL STRUCTURE (inherent to the turn-taking system in conversation but may extend to a variety of oral genres)**

- How to perform openings & reopenings
  - Topic establishment & change
  - How to hold & relinquish the floor
  - How to interrupt
  - How to collaborate & backchannel
  - How to do preclosings and closings
  - Adjacency pairs (related to actional competence)
    - first and second pair parts (knowing preferred and dispreferred responses)
- 

*Cohesion* is the area of discourse competence most closely associated with linguistic competence (see Halliday & Hasan 1976, 1989). It deals with the bottom-up elements that help generate texts, accounting for how pronouns, demonstratives, articles and other markers signal textual *co-reference* in written and oral discourse. Cohesion also accounts for how conventions of *substitution* and *ellipsis* allow speakers/writers to indicate *co-classification* and to avoid unnecessary repetition. The use of *conjunction* (e.g., 'and', 'but', 'however') to make explicit links between propositions in discourse is another important cohesive device. *Lexical chains* and *lexical repetitions*, which relate to derivational morphology, semantics, and content schemata, are a part of cohesion

and also coherence, which we discuss below. Finally, the conventions related to the use of *parallel structure* (also an aspect of both cohesion and coherence) make it easier for listeners/readers to process a piece of text such as 'I like swimming and hiking' than to process an unparallel counterpart such as 'I like swimming and to hike'.

According to Hatch (1992), the *deixis system* is an important aspect of discourse competence in that it links the situational context with the discourse, thus making it possible to interpret deictic personal pronouns ('I', 'you'); spatial references ('here', 'there'); temporal references ('now', 'then'); and certain textual references (e.g., 'the following example', 'the chart above').

The most difficult-to-describe area of discourse competence appears to be *coherence*, i.e., the degree to which sentences or utterances in a discourse sequence are felt to be interrelated rather than unrelated. It is typically easier to describe coherence in written than in oral discourse. There is obviously some interaction with cohesion; however, as Enkvist (1978) and Halliday & Hasan (1989) point out, it is possible for a text to have elements of cohesion without being coherent.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, as Morgan & Sellner (1980) and Carrell (1982) have demonstrated, it is also possible for short texts to be coherent without having any cohesive ties.<sup>4</sup> In general, however, we agree with Halliday & Hasan (1989) that coherent texts consisting of more than two or three clauses will almost always exhibit some cohesive ties.

Coherence is concerned with *macrostructure* in that its major focus is the expression of content and purpose in terms of *top-down organization of propositions*. It is concerned with what is *thematic* (i.e., what the point of departure of a speaker/writer's message is). The speaker (and even more so the writer) must use linguistic signals that make discourse cohere, which means not only using cohesive devices such as reference markers and lexical or semantic repetition or entailment but also a *sequencing or ordering of propositional structures* which takes into account social relationships, shared knowledge, and genre, and which generally follows certain *preferred organizational patterns*: temporal/chronological ordering, spatial organization, cause-effect, condition-result, etc. *Temporal sequencing* has its own conventions in that tense continuity or shift relate to topic or to speaker/writer affect; also, violations of natural chronological order typically must be marked using special adverbial signals and/or marked tenses such as the past perfect in English.

For listeners or readers, coherence relates to ease of interpretation as they use their linguistic knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, and situational clues to relate a piece of discourse to *objects* and *events* (real or imagined) beyond the text itself. As Grice (1975) has pointed out, discourse is assumed to be coherent unless it is impossible to infer a function and generate a possible interpretation.

The *generic structure* of various types of spoken and written texts is an object of concern in discourse analysis (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Swales, 1990). Every language has its formal schemata (Carrell 1984), which relate to the development of a variety of genres. Certain written genres have a more highly



definable structure than others, e.g., research reports (introduction, methods, results, discussion). Likewise, certain spoken genres, such as the sermon, tend to be more highly structured than oral narrative, which is a more open-ended genre but with a set of expected features nonetheless (opening/setting, complication, resolution—all within a unified framework regarding time and participants). There is currently a variety of approaches to the analysis of genre (see Swales, 1990), including Biber's (1988) informative and valuable computational approach.

*Conversational structure*, which is inherent to the turn-taking system in oral conversation (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), is the final aspect of discourse competence as we have outlined it. This area is highly relevant for communicative competence and language teaching (see Richards, 1990), since conversation is the most fundamental means of conducting human affairs. While usually associated with conversation, it is important to realize that these turn-taking conventions may also extend to other oral genres such as narratives, interviews, or lectures. The turn-taking system deals with how people *open* and *reopen* conversation, how they *establish* and *change topics*, how they *hold* and *relinquish the floor*, how they *backchannel* (i.e., give short verbal or non-verbal "carry-on" feedback), how they *interrupt*, how they *collaborate* (i.e., complete utterances with or for the interlocutor), and how they *perform preclosings and closings*. These interactive procedures are very often performed by means of "discourse regulating gambits" (Kasper, 1989:190) and conversational routines. Polished conversationalists are in command of hundreds, if not thousands, of such phrases.<sup>5</sup>

The turn-taking system is closely associated with the notion of *repair*, e.g., how speakers correct themselves or others in conversation, which we include under strategic competence; and with *adjacency pairs*, which are also related to actional competence. Adjacency pairs form discourse "chunks" where one speaker initiates (e.g., 'Hi, how are you?') and the other responds (e.g., 'Fine, thanks. And you?') in ways that are describable and often quite predictable. Some adjacency pairs involve giving a *preferred* response to a first-pair part (e.g., accepting an invitation that has just been extended); such responses are usually direct and structurally simple. However, other responses are viewed as *dispreferred* and will require more effort and follow-up work on the part of participants than a preferred response (e.g., when declining an invitation). Dispreferred responses occur less frequently than the preferred ones, and tend to pose more difficulties for learners.

## Linguistic Competence

Linguistic competence is historically the most thoroughly discussed component of our model and, for this reason, our discussion of it will be very brief. It comprises the basic elements of communication: the sentence patterns and types, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections, and the

lexical resources, as well as the phonological and orthographic systems needed to realize communication as speech or writing (cf. Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983; Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, in press) (see Table 2).

We do, however, wish to emphasize the importance of lexico-grammatical building blocks, that is, "lexicalized sentence stems" (Pawley & Syder, 1983) or "formulaic constructions" (Pawley, 1992). This area has received increasing recognition and importance over the past decade<sup>6</sup>; Widdowson (1989, p.135), for example, claims that

communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions from scratch as and when occasion requires. It is much more a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual standards.

Nattinger & DeCarrico's (1992, 1994) discussion of formulaic speech offers a potentially very useful approach to dealing with the complexity of conventionalized forms. They define "lexical phrases" as "form/function composites," that is, "collocations ... that *have* been assigned pragmatic functions" (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992, p. 36). Thus they consider lexical phrases to be separate from idioms, clichés, and other types of collocations that are purely lexical and thus belong to linguistic competence. Lexical phrases, categorized according to their functional roles, would fall under either actional competence (e.g., conventionalized forms expressing language functions) or discourse competence (e.g., temporal connectors, relators, and phrases related to conversational structure and turn-taking). Thus, we feel, lexical knowledge appropriately belongs to more than one area: its systematic aspects (including meanings, word-building processes) to linguistic competence, and lexical phrases to actional and discourse competencies.

### **Actional Competence**

Actional competence is defined as competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent, that is, matching actional intent with linguistic form based on the knowledge of an inventory of verbal schemata that carry illocutionary force (speech acts and speech act sets). Thus, actional competence is closely related to "interlanguage pragmatics," which has been defined by Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993a) as "the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language" (p. 3). It must be noted that our conceptualization of actional competence is mainly restricted to

**Table 2. Suggested Components of Linguistic Competence**

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**SYNTAX**

- Constituent/phrase structure
- Word order (canonical and marked)
- Sentence types
  - statements, negatives, questions, imperatives, exclamations
- Special constructions
  - existentials (*there + BE...*)
  - clefts (*It's X that/who...*; *What + sub. + verb + BE*)
  - question tags, etc.
- Modifiers/intensifiers
  - quantifiers, comparing and equating
- Coordination (and, or, etc.) and correlation (*both X and Y; either X or Y*)
- Subordination (e.g., adverbial clauses, conditionals)
- Embedding
  - noun clauses, relative clauses (e.g., restrictive and non-restrictive)
  - reported speech

**MORPHOLOGY**

- Parts of speech
- Inflections (e.g., agreement and concord)
- Derivational processes (productive ones)
  - compounding, affixation, conversion/incorporation

**LEXICON (receptive and productive)**

- Words
  - content words (Ns, Vs, ADJs)
  - function words (pronouns, prepositions, verbal auxiliaries, etc.)
- Routines
  - word-like fixed phrases (e.g., *of course*, *all of a sudden*)
  - formulaic and semi-formulaic chunks (e.g., *how do you do?*)
- Collocations
  - V-Obj (e.g., *spend money*), Adv-Adj (e.g., *mutually intelligible*), Adj-N (e.g., *tall building*)
- Idioms (e.g., *kick the bucket*)

**PHONOLOGY (for pronunciation)**

- Segmentals
  - vowels, consonants, syllable types, sandhi variation (changes and reductions between adjacent sounds in the stream of speech)
- Suprasegmentals
  - prominence, stress, intonation, rhythm

**ORTHOGRAPHY (for spelling)**

- Letters (if writing system is alphabetic)
  - Phoneme-grapheme correspondences
  - Rules of spelling
  - Conventions for mechanics and punctuation
-

oral communication; a close parallel to actional competence in written communication would be "rhetorical competence," which includes analysis of the "moves" and "lexical routines" typical of any given written genre (see Swales, 1990; Hoey, 1991; Bachman, 1990; & Vande Kopple, 1989, 1991).

While we are critical of any "functions only" approach to CLT and, indeed, there are some indications that speech act theory is gradually losing favor in pragmatics and applied linguistics (Levinson, 1983; Tarone & Yule, 1989), this does not mean that we do not consider actional competence an important part of L2 interactional knowledge from a pedagogical perspective. Speech acts and language functions have traditionally formed the "linguistic" base for CLT theory, and several elaborate taxonomies of the various functions language learners need to master have been developed (the most famous of which has been *The Threshold Level* by van Ek, 1977). Indeed, our addition of actional competence to the Canale & Swain model was originally motivated by the fact that we were unable to include the functional taxonomies developed by CLT theoreticians logically under any of the four traditional constituent competencies. The recent increase in emphasis on language learning tasks and task-based syllabi in language teaching theory (Long & Crookes, 1992) provides another reason for our featuring language functions and speech act sets in a pedagogically motivated model, because these units are expected to have an important role in task analysis.

Speech acts have traditionally been discussed in applied linguistics under sociolinguistic competence (see, for example, Tarone & Yule, 1989) because the linguistic verbalization of language functions shows considerable contextual variation as a function of cross-cultural and sociolinguistic variables. However, similar to Bachman (1990) and Bachman & Palmer (in preparation), we felt that within a broadly conceived pragmatic/sociolinguistic complex it was useful to separate the dimension associated with actional intent from that associated with sociocultural factors. The frequency of language functions in real-life communication has resulted in a wide range of conventionalized forms, sentence stems, formulaic expressions and strategies in every language, and thus a speaker with a developed sense of actional competence is in command of a wide repertoire of such chunks as well as rules of how to combine and sequence these to form complex actional patterns. This knowledge of linguistic resources is distinct from the knowledge of sociocultural rules and norms that are associated with an awareness of contextual variables. This is evidenced in cases when learners exercise efficient actional behavior *without* being contextually appropriate, or when a stylistically appropriate speech act does *not* achieve the intended illocutionary intent. An example of the former case is a non-native speaker saying upon leaving 'It's nice to have met you,' to someone he had met many times before; 'It was nice seeing you again,' would have been more appropriate. An example of the second case can occur when a non-native speaker simply does not understand the illocutionary intent of an indirect speech act like 'you want to close the window?' uttered in an appropriately informal context.



It should be noted that in educational applications, the system of language functions has indeed often been treated separately from contextual and stylistic variables. In their communicative syllabus model, Dubin & Olshtain (1986), for example, conceptualized an inventory of functions and an independent sociocultural content component involving rules of appropriateness. Similarly, *The Threshold Level* (van Ek, 1977) separates functional categories from settings, speaker roles, and style (which are all components of our sociocultural competence), and this tendency is even stronger in the revised version (van Ek and Trim, 1991), which contains, for example, separate sections on politeness conventions and sociocultural background knowledge as well.

The main problem with providing component specifications for actional competence is that one cannot easily give an explicit and precise definition of what "language functions" are (Berns, 1990). They are often described either very broadly or in a manner which is too situation-specific. Flowerdew (1990) argues that any attempt to categorize functions with the aim of producing a comprehensive, all-purpose system is likely to come under criticism for being somewhat ad-hoc and subjective. Nonetheless, for practical, pedagogical purposes it is possible to draw up a list of the most common language functions which have sufficiently clear face and content validity, and indeed several such lists have been compiled and used in language instruction to good effect (e.g., van Ek, 1977; Blundell, Higgins & Middlemiss, 1982; Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983; van Ek & Trim, 1991).

Table 3 outlines our conception of the domain of actional competence, divided into two main components, *knowledge of language functions* and *knowledge of speech act sets*. Based partly on Finocchiaro & Brumfit's (1983) and van Ek & Trim's (1991) work, the table categorizes language functions according to seven key areas: *interpersonal exchange, information, opinions, feelings, suasion, problems, and future scenarios*. We do not claim, however, that this is a completely comprehensive list nor that the categorization has unshakable validity. Rather, we intend it to serve as a helpful organizational construct and a practical guide for teachers, materials writers, and those designing classroom language tests; therefore, our concern in compiling this list was to achieve a clear and simple presentation.

There is one general point we would like to emphasize with regard to language functions, and this concerns indirect speech acts (e.g., knowing that 'You want to be back here by 4 o'clock' means 'Be back by 4!'). Indirect speech acts are rarely covered in foreign language teaching syllabi, which might suggest to learners that "the most common realization forms for all speech acts are the most direct, and [yet] ... the majority of speech acts are most frequently realized indirectly" (Levinson, 1983, p. 264). Some indirect speech acts have become so conventionalized as a result of their frequency that they no longer strike native speakers as indirect. This, however, does not hold true for non-native speakers, who often have problems understanding such conventions and therefore tend to underutilize them even at advanced levels (Preston, 1989).



How do native speakers cope with indirect speech acts? According to Olshtain and Cohen (1991), they "recognize the illocutionary force of an utterance by pairing up the situational information within which the utterance has been produced with the context of that utterance" (p. 155). Cook (1985) points out that the functions and realizations of speech acts interact with participant characteristics and individual perception of the situation, which is further complicated by the fact that "speech act functions may overlap or a speaker may have several intentions in mind; thus a simple utterance can have more than one function" (Hatch, 1992, p. 135). The key, then, to developing student awareness of language functions and speech acts is to present them in larger pragmatic contexts for interpretation and to emphasize their situational constraints. Unless we do this, learners will repeatedly fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary force or politeness value of these communicative acts (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a).

Following from this, the second main component of actional competence concerns the *knowledge of speech act sets*. Most often the patterns of interaction surrounding a particular speech act are themselves highly conventionalized and many of these larger units have been studied and referred to as "speech act sets" (Olshtain & Cohen, 1991, p. 155), "verbal exchange patterns" (van Ek & Trim, 1991, p. 93), or "speech events" (Hatch, 1992, p. 136). One example is Olshtain & Cohen's (1991, p. 156) "apology speech act set," which consists of five realization elements; two are obligatory: *expressing an apology* and *expressing responsibility*, and three are situation-specific and optional: *offering an explanation*, *offering repair*, and *promising nonrecurrence*. Thus in order to be able to use language functions in context, language learners need to be familiar with how individual speech acts are integrated into the higher levels of the communication system. Therefore, actional competence also involves knowledge of how speech acts and language functions can be patterned and sequenced in real-life situations.

At this point we would like to emphasize that while much of the existing research on speech act sets is interesting and potentially useful, it is also problematic in that almost all the descriptive data are elicited rather than naturalistic. The interactional dynamics of such speech acts have thus not been adequately examined and described. Until authentic spontaneous speech acts are collected and analyzed it would be premature to apply the existing research findings uncritically. However, the existing work does provide useful guidelines in the absence of more definitive research. In particular, much of the research points out cases where the inventory or the order of realization of a speech act set is different in the learners' L1 and the L2. In such cases, the contrastive information can be useful.

**Table 3. Suggested Components of Actional Competence**

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<b>KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS</b>	
-	<b>INTERPERSONAL EXCHANGE</b>
-	Greeting and leavetaking
-	Making introductions, identifying oneself
-	Extending, accepting and declining invitations and offers
-	Making and breaking engagements
-	Expressing and acknowledging gratitude
-	Complimenting and congratulating
-	Reacting to the interlocutor's speech
-	- showing attention, interest, surprise, sympathy, happiness, disbelief, disappointment
-	<b>INFORMATION</b>
-	Asking for and giving information
-	Reporting (describing and narrating)
-	Remembering
-	Explaining and discussing
-	<b>OPINIONS</b>
-	Expressing and finding out about opinions and attitudes
-	Agreeing and disagreeing
-	Approving and disapproving
-	Showing satisfaction and dissatisfaction
-	<b>FEELINGS</b>
-	Expressing and finding out about feelings
-	- love, happiness, sadness, pleasure, anxiety, anger, embarrassment, pain, relief, fear,
-	- annoyance, surprise, etc.
-	<b>SUASION</b>
-	Suggesting, requesting and instructing
-	Giving orders, advising and warning
-	Persuading, encouraging and discouraging
-	Asking for, granting and withholding permission
-	<b>PROBLEMS</b>
-	Complaining and criticizing
-	Blaming and accusing
-	Admitting and denying
-	Regretting
-	Apologizing and forgiving
-	<b>FUTURE SCENARIOS</b>
-	Expressing and finding out about wishes, hopes, and desires
-	Expressing and eliciting plans, goals, and intentions
-	Promising
-	Predicting and speculating
-	Discussing possibilities and capabilities of doing something
<b>KNOWLEDGE OF SPEECH ACT SETS</b>	

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*Note:* This table is for oral language; a parallel list of specifications is needed for written language—perhaps labeled 'rhetorical competence.'

## Sociocultural Competence

Sociocultural competence refers to the speaker's knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in language use. These factors are complex and interrelated, which stems from the fact that language is not simply a communication coding system but also an integral part of the individual's identity and the most important channel of social organization, embedded in the culture of the communities where it is used. As Nunan (1992) states, "Only by studying language in its social and cultural contexts, will we come to appreciate the apparent paradox of language acquisition: that it is at once a deeply personal and yet highly social process" (p. 23).

Language learners face this complexity as soon as they first try to apply the L2 knowledge they have learned to real-life communication, and these first attempts can be disastrous: the "culture-free," "out-of-context," and very often even "meaning-free" L2 instruction (Damen, 1987, p. xvii), which is still too typical of foreign language classes around the world, simply does not prepare learners to cope with the complexity of real-life language use efficiently. L2 learners should be made aware of the fact that making a social or cultural blunder is likely to lead to far more serious communication breakdowns than a linguistic error or the lack of a particular word. Raising sociocultural awareness, however, is not an easy task, because sociocultural rules and normative patterns of expected or acceptable behavior have not yet been adequately analyzed and described (Savignon, 1983; Wolfson, 1989). Even when good descriptions are available, sociocultural rules and norms are so ingrained in our own identity (and that of the learner) that it is difficult to change behavior based on a new set of assumptions.

We have divided the relevant sociocultural variables into four main categories (see Table 4). The first set of variables, *social contextual factors*, concerns the participants in the interaction and the communicative situation. The participants' *age, gender, office* (profession, rank and public position), *status* (social standing), *social distance* from and *relations* to each other (both in terms of power and affect) are known to determine how they talk and are talked to (cf. Preston, 1989; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Situational variables involve the *temporal* and *physical* aspects of the interaction (time and duration, location) as well as the social dimension of the *situation* (e.g., a formal reception).

The second category in Table 4, *stylistic appropriateness factors*, includes variables that lend themselves to explicit instruction. The most important *politeness strategies* can readily be presented as language teaching input (van Ek & Trim, 1991; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1992) and the main characteristics of various *styles* and *registers* can also be summarized and presented for the students.

**Table 4. Suggested Components of Sociocultural Competence**

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**SOCIAL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**

- Participant variables
  - age, gender, office and status, social distance, relations (power and affective)
- Situational variables
  - time, place, social situation

**STYLISTIC APPROPRIATENESS FACTORS**

- Politeness conventions and strategies
- Stylistic variation
  - degrees of formality
  - field-specific registers

**CULTURAL FACTORS**

- Sociocultural background knowledge of the target language community
  - living conditions (way of living, living standards); social and institutional structure; social conventions and rituals; major values, beliefs, and norms; taboo topics; historical background; cultural aspects including literature and arts
- Awareness of major dialect or regional differences
- Cross-cultural awareness
  - differences; similarities; strategies for cross-cultural communication

**NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIVE FACTORS**

- Kinesic factors (body language)
    - discourse controlling behaviors (non-verbal turn-taking signals)
    - backchannel behaviors
    - affective markers (facial expressions), gestures, eye contact
  - Proxemic factors (use of space)
  - Haptic factors (touching)
  - Paralinguistic factors
    - acoustical sounds, nonvocal noises
  - Silence
- 

*Cultural factors* involve three main components: *sociocultural background knowledge of the target language community*, *awareness of major dialect or regional differences*, and *cross-cultural awareness*. Widdowson (1990) refers to these areas of knowledge as "schematic knowledge," which complements the "systemic knowledge" of the language code; he argues that in real-life communication, the systemic knowledge is subservient to the schematic. The *sociocultural background knowledge of the target language community* is also given its due importance by van Ek & Trim (1991), who assign a separate category to such issues in their revised *Threshold Level* objectives. We share their belief that some knowledge of the life and traditions, as well as the history



and literature of the target speaker community is extremely useful to completely successful and comprehensive communication with its members.<sup>7</sup> The *awareness of major dialect and regional differences* is particularly important with languages like English, where several considerably different standard regional varieties exist. As for *crosscultural awareness*, there are so many culture-specific *do's* and *don't's* that without any knowledge of these, a language learner is constantly walking through a cultural minefield. Second language acquisition and "second culture acquisition" (Robinson, 1991) are inextricably bound.

The fourth main component of sociocultural competence involves *non-verbal communicative factors*. As Pennycook (1985) reiterates, "actions speak louder than words," with non-verbal communication carrying a significant proportion of social meaning. Because nonverbal actions operate largely on an unconscious level, L2 speakers may not even realize that some miscommunication can be fostered by inappropriate non-verbal signals.

Non-verbal communication in our model is divided into five components. The first is *kinesic behavior* or *body language*, involving nonverbal signals to regulate turn-taking (e.g., intake of breath, tensing the body and leaning forward) or to indicate to the interlocutor that what he/she says is being understood, as well as affective markers (such as facial expressions), gestures (especially the ones with conventionalized meanings) and eye contact (Kellerman, 1992). The second component, *proxemic factors*, concerns the speakers' use of space (e.g., physical distance between people), and the third, *haptic factors*, concerns the role of touching in the target language community; both factors can be the source of serious cross-cultural tension. The fourth component involves *paralinguistic factors* such as acoustical sounds (e.g., grunts) and nonvocal noises (e.g., hisses), but it does not include intonation, which we consider to be part of the basic linguistic code and thus part of linguistic competence. Paralinguistic factors give the message affective depth and function as backchannel signals. The final component, *silence*, often carries socially and culturally determined meaning, as is expressed by phrases like "pregnant pause" or "eloquent silence."

The aspects of sociocultural competence that will be particularly problematic for learners are the function of the differences between the communicative styles of the L1 and L2 communities. Marsch (1990) proposes that teachers should conduct a "cultural needs analysis" among their students using a questionnaire format to select the relevant "cultural rules" to be taught. Table 4 could serve as a guideline and a checklist of issues for designing such a questionnaire, and the whole area can be a matter for investigation and negotiation between teachers and students. However, we should bear in mind Kramsch's (1993, p. 49) caution about the pedagogy of sociocultural competence:

Teaching how to shape contexts of interaction cannot be done directly by a well-dosed administration of facts ... Pragmatic knowledge ... can only be acquired through observation and analysis and a feel for the

whole social context. It is not an 'if-then' affair. It requires, therefore, a totally different pedagogic approach.

There are several limitations to our description of sociocultural competence. First, this part of our model is highly tentative in nature; we are under no illusion that we have the background to catalogue this vast area comprehensively. Second, people can always choose to conform or not conform to the norms presented to them; however, the basis of making an explicit choice is knowledge. Third, non-native speakers are often very vulnerable in terms of both power relations in the L2 community and their understanding of the consequences of nonconformity. Thus, whenever possible, the teacher should present not only the target norms—being very careful in the process not to present his/her own values or preferences as absolutes—but also the choices and the consequences of these choices to learners.

### Strategic Competence

We conceptualize strategic competence as knowledge of communication strategies and how to use them. This conceptualization follows that of Canale & Swain (1980); however, research in the 1980s has identified several other types of strategies relevant to language learning, language processing, and language production.<sup>8</sup> In our pedagogically oriented framework, we have limited our focus to communication strategies because these have been described most explicitly and also because we consider these the strategies most relevant to communicative language use and CLT. We recognize that this part of our model could be greatly expanded.

Work on communication strategies has typically highlighted three functions of strategy use from three different perspectives:

- (a) *Psycholinguistic perspective*: Communication strategies are verbal plans used by speakers to overcome problems in the planning and execution stages of reaching a communicative goal; e.g., avoiding trouble spots or compensating for not knowing a vocabulary item (cf. Færch & Kasper, 1984a).
- (b) *Interactional perspective*: Communication strategies involve appeals for help as well as other cooperative problem-solving behaviors which occur *after* some problem has surfaced during the course of communication, that is, various types of negotiation of meaning and repair mechanisms (cf. Tarone, 1980; Varonis & Gass, 1985; Gass & Varonis, 1991).
- (c) *Communication continuity/maintenance perspective*: Communication strategies are means of keeping the communication channel open in the face of communication difficulties, and playing for time to think and to make (alternative) speech plans (cf. Dörnyei, in press).

It is important to note that all the above functions are related to communication *problems* and *difficulties*, following traditional conceptualizations which posited problem-orientedness as a central feature of communication strategies. It is possible, however, to conceptualize communication strategies in a broader sense by also including attempts to "enhance the effectiveness of communication" (Canale, 1983, p. 11); however, cognitive strategies falling under this latter category (referred to by Tarone, 1980 as "production strategies") have received less attention in past research and will not be discussed in this paper. Based on the three functions above, our description of strategic competence (see Table 5) consists of five main parts:

*Avoidance or reduction strategies* involve tailoring one's message to one's resources by either *replacing messages*, *avoiding topics*, or, as an extreme case, *abandoning one's message* altogether.

*Achievement or compensatory strategies* involve manipulating available language to reach a communicative goal and this may entail compensating for linguistic deficiencies. These strategies have been the traditional concern of communication strategy research, and in Table 5 we have listed the ten types (with examples) we consider most common and important (for more detailed reviews, see Bialystok, 1990; Cook, 1993).

*Stalling or time-gaining strategies* include *fillers*, *hesitation devices* and *gambits* as well as *repetitions* (e.g., repeating what the other has said while thinking).<sup>9</sup> We should note here that several authors draw attention to the danger of L2 learners using taught fillers/gambits inappropriately if the presentation has been superficial and not adequately contextualized (cf. Færch & Kasper, 1984b; Edmondson & House, 1981; Wildner-Basset, 1994).

*Self-monitoring strategies* involve correcting or changing something in one's own speech (*self-repair*) as well as *rephrasing* (and often over-elaborating) one's message to further ensure that it gets through.

The last category in Table 5, *interactional strategies*, highlights the cooperative aspect of strategy use. *Appeals for help* are similar to achievement strategies in function but through using them the learner exploits his/her interlocutor's knowledge rather than manipulating his/her own language resources. *Meaning negotiation strategies* are of various types; applying Varonis & Gass's (1985) system, we have divided them into ways of *indicating a problem*, *responding* to such an indication, and making *comprehension checks*. These categories are further broken down into subcategories, listed in Table 5 with examples.

**Table 5. Suggested Components of Strategic Competence**

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**AVOIDANCE or REDUCTION STRATEGIES**

- Message replacement
- Topic avoidance
- Message abandonment

**ACHIEVEMENT or COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES**

- Circumlocution (e.g., *the thing you open bottles with* for *corkscrew*)
- Approximation (e.g., *fish* for *carp*)
- All-purpose words (e.g., *thingy, thingamajig*)
- Non-linguistic means (mime, pointing, gestures, drawing pictures)
- Restructuring (e.g., *The bus was very... there were a lot of people on it*)
- Word-coinage (e.g., *vegetarianist*)
- Literal translation from L1
- Foreignizing (e.g., L1 word with L2 pronunciation)
- Code switching to L1 or L3
- Retrieval (e.g., *bro... bron... bronze*)

**STALLING or TIME-GAINING STRATEGIES**

- Fillers, hesitation devices and gambits (e.g., *well, actually..., where was I...?*)
- Self and other-repetition

**SELF-MONITORING STRATEGIES**

- Self-initiated repair (e.g., *I mean...*)
- Self-rephrasing (over-elaboration) (e.g., *This is for students... pupils... when you're at school...*)

**INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES**

- Appeals for help
  - direct (e.g., *What do you call...?*)
  - indirect (e.g., *I don't know the word in English...* or puzzled expression)
- Meaning negotiation strategies

*Indicators of non/mis-understanding*

- requests
  - repetition requests (e.g., *Pardon?* or *Could you say that again please?*)
  - clarification requests (e.g., *What do you mean by...?*)
  - confirmation requests (e.g., *Did you say...?*)
- expressions of non-understanding
  - verbal (e.g., *Sorry, I'm not sure I understand...*)
  - non-verbal (raised eyebrows, blank look)
- interpretive summary (e.g., *You mean...?/So what you're saying is...?*)

*Responses*

- repetition, rephrasing, expansion, reduction, confirmation, rejection, repair

*Comprehension checks*

- whether the interlocutor can follow you (e.g., *Am I making sense?*)
  - whether what you said was correct or grammatical (e.g., *Can I/you say that?*)
  - whether the interlocutor is listening (e.g., on the phone: *Are you still there?*)
  - whether the interlocutor can hear you
-



We believe that communication strategy training—some of which will overlap with training in actional competence objectives such as apologies and requests—can have a place in language teaching syllabi (cf. Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991, 1992; Dörnyei, in press). Such strategy instruction might involve (a) raising learner awareness about the nature and communicative potential of communication strategies; (b) encouraging students to be willing to take risks and use communication strategies; (c) providing L2 models of the use of certain communication strategies; (d) highlighting crosscultural differences in strategy use; (e) teaching communication strategies directly by presenting learners with linguistic devices to verbalize them; (f) providing opportunities for learners to practice strategy use.<sup>10</sup> In other words, many of the techniques now used to explicitly teach structures, vocabulary, speech act sets, etc. can also be used to teach communication strategies.

## CONCLUSION

Our main argument echoes an observation made by Canale more than ten years ago:

The current disarray in conceptualization, research and application in the area of communicative language pedagogy results in large part from failure to consider and develop an adequate theoretical framework (Canale, 1983, p. 2).

In the past decade much research related to communicative competence and communicative language use has emerged in various fields, research which now allows us to develop a model with more detailed content specifications than was possible in the early 1980s. Our construct is motivated by practical considerations reflecting our interests in language teaching, language analysis, and teacher training; our aim therefore has been to organize the knowledge available about language use in a way that is consumable for classroom practice. This knowledge is still fragmentary, but we believe that a great deal more of it is relevant and potentially applicable than is currently exploited in language pedagogy. Language teaching methodologists, materials writers and language testers badly need a comprehensive and accessible description of the components of communicative competence in order to have more concrete pieces of language to work with at the fine-tuning stage. One obvious purpose of any model of this sort is to serve as an elaborated “checklist” that practitioners can refer to.

A second purpose of models such as ours is to draw together a wide range of issues in an attempt to synthesize them and form a basis for further research. We are aware that our model—like all the others proposed to date—has certain

inconsistencies and limitations, and that it is therefore likely to raise several questions. One such question concerns where *lexis*, particularly formulaic chunks, is to be placed in a model of communicative competence and how important the role of formulaic language is. Secondly, even though our summary of communication strategies is broader than those of some previous taxonomies such as Canale & Swain's (i.e., it includes a list of interactional strategies), our restricting of strategic competence to communication strategies only is likely to be considered too narrow an interpretation of strategic competence. Our current conceptualization of sociocultural competence, on the other hand, might still be too broad, and the past tendency to redefine some of the sub-components of sociolinguistic or sociocultural competence as independent competencies in their own right may well continue. There exist, for example, plausible arguments for separating a "non-verbal" dimension from the sociocultural component we have presented.

In addition, the sub-components of the five competencies will need to be further elaborated, and the extent of their teachability (or learnability) assessed in order to make them optimally relevant to language pedagogy. In their present form our components contain a mixture of categories: knowledge, rules, skills, abilities, conditions, conventions, maxims, strategies, lexical items, etc. Eventually these will have to be more systematically specified, based on a psycholinguistic model of language processing (e.g., Levelt, 1989; de Bot, 1992). An explicit language processing basis would also make it possible to indicate underlying relationships between the sub-components of the constituent competencies of the model rather than simply listing them as we did. We thus view our paper as part of an ongoing discussion and call for further research and contributions toward the creation of a better model and a more comprehensive set of guidelines for curriculum design, language analysis, materials development, teacher training, classroom research, and language assessment.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that the application of any theoretical model of communicative competence is relative rather than absolute. As McGroarty (1984) points out, "communicative competence" can have different meanings depending on the learners and learning objectives inherent in a given context. Some components (or sub-components) may be more heavily weighted in some teaching-learning situations than in others. Therefore, during the course of a thorough needs analysis, a model such as ours may be adapted and/or reinterpreted according to the communicative needs of the specific learner group to which it is being applied. This is in essence what Hoekje & Williams (1992) had to do when they applied Canale & Swain's framework to the program development and assessment phases of their course for training international teaching assistants. Despite the problems they encountered and the modifications they had to make, they concluded that the communicative competence framework provided an integrated and principled basis for designing a language program. Given our own experiences, we certainly agree.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Along the lines of Richards' (1990) "direct approach" to the teaching of conversation as involving "planning a conversational program around the specific microskills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation" (pp. 76-77).

<sup>2</sup> We do not propose a return to traditional synthetic, structural syllabuses; instead, *pedagogic tasks* combined with a systematic *focus on form*, as outlined by Long & Crookes (1992), could well function as the primary organizational units in a "direct" communicative syllabus. This would be in accordance with Ellis' argument that a structural syllabus has a substantial role in fostering second language acquisition if it is "used alongside some kind of meaning-based syllabus" (Ellis, 1993, p. 91).

<sup>3</sup> Enkvist's example is: "A week has seven *days*. Every *day* I feed my *cat*. *Cats* have four legs. The *cat* is on the *mat*. '*Mat*' has three letters."

<sup>4</sup> E.g., "The picnic was a complete failure. No one remembered to bring a corkscrew."

<sup>5</sup> Lists for teaching purposes of such gambits and phrases in English can be found, for example, in Keller & Wamer (1988), and Dömyei & Thurrell (1992).

<sup>6</sup> The linguist Dwight Bolinger (1976) was one of the first to argue for lexical phrases when he wrote, "...our language...provides us with an incredibly large number of prefabs, which have the magical property of persisting..." (p. 1).

<sup>7</sup> Under some circumstances, such as when illiterate immigrants come to a new country and begin to learn the new language, they are not necessarily doomed to unsuccessful communication with the natives; however, the range of topics and their purposes for communication cannot be as broad, elevated, and comprehensive as can that of learners who share knowledge of the life, traditions, literature, and history of the L2 community.

<sup>8</sup> Oxford (1990), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), and Wenden (1991) provide a detailed discussion of *learning strategies*. Bachman, Purpura & Cushing (1993) propose a comprehensive system of strategies that contains three main components, *cognitive strategies*, *metacognitive strategies*, and *communication or language use strategies* (see also Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer in preparation).

<sup>9</sup> These strategies are functionally different from achievement or interactional strategies and have not been included in the traditionally best-known taxonomies (e.g., Tarone, 1980; Færch & Kasper, 1984a; Bialystok, 1990). Other researchers, however, highlighted the significance of fillers as a conscious means to sustain communication (e.g., Savignon, 1983) and included them in their lists of communication strategies (e.g., Canale, 1983). For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Dömyei (in press).

<sup>10</sup> It should be mentioned, however, that there has been considerable controversy over the explicit teachability of communication strategies (see, for example, Bialystok, 1990; Kellerman, 1991; Dömyei, in press).



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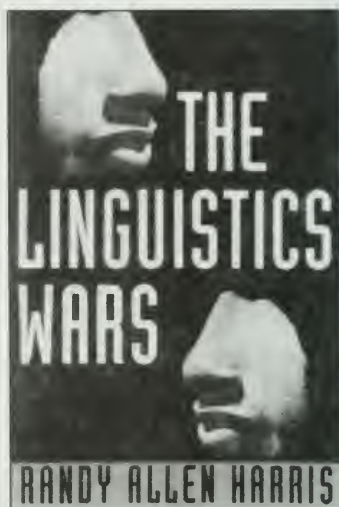
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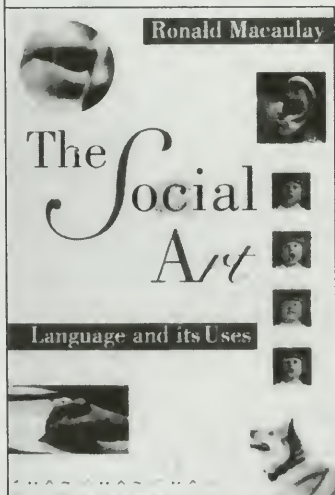
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# **"Aw, man, where you goin'?": Classroom Interaction and the Development of L2 Interactional Competence**

Joan Kelly Hall  
*University of Georgia*

*The interactive practices of foreign language (FL) classrooms are significant to the development of learners' L2 interactional competence in that these practices are often the only exposure to FL talk that the learners get, especially in the early years of language instruction. To gain some understanding of the varied paths that individual development of this competence can take we must take into account the discursive structures and linguistic resources of these interactional environments. This article reports on a study with such a purpose. Of specific concern is how topics are discursively established and managed in an interactive practice whose pedagogical purpose is to provide speaking opportunities for a group of students in a first year high school Spanish class. The findings indicate that the way in which topics are developed in this practice differs significantly from how they are typically developed in ordinary interactive practices outside of the FL classroom. It is concluded that learners are getting less than what they need to fully develop their interactional competence in Spanish. The analysis makes clear our need to give more thoughtful consideration to how we define the comprehensibility of FL classroom interaction and the role that it plays in developing L2 interactional competence.*

## **INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>**

Research on communication and language acquisition (e.g., Berman & Slobin, 1994; Dore et al., 1978; Ochs, 1988; Snow & Goldfield, 1983; Snow, 1991; Wu et al., 1994) suggests that a substantial portion of our communicative competence is fundamentally pragmatic. More specifically, it is defined by and organized around culturally framed and linguistically patterned communicative plans, goals, and linguistic resources which comprise *interactive practices* (Hall, 1993; Hall & Brooks, 1995).<sup>2</sup> Typical resources include speech act sequences and the presuppositions for their use, turn-taking patterns, and the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical means by which practice-significant topics are developed. Research on schooling practices from a sociocultural perspective (e.g., Bowers & Flinders, 1990; Gutierrez, 1994; Smagorinsky, 1993) provides further evidence on the practice-specific nature of development. According to these studies, what students learn to do in classroom interactive practices is at least partially based

on 1) the communicative plans and goals, and linguistic resources that teachers make available, and 2) the extended opportunities learners are given to work with these plans, goals, and resources with more expert communicators.

Much communicative learning in language classrooms is realized through engagement in regularly occurring interactive practices. In *foreign* language classrooms, these practices play an especially significant role in that they are often the only exposure to communicative patterns in the FL that the students get, especially in the early years of language instruction. Looking at the interaction of a FL classroom from a sociocultural perspective, the important role that these teachers play becomes evident. Most importantly, they construct frameworks of interactive practices that are significant to learning and provide models of competent participation, including the uses of appropriate discursive structures and other linguistic resources associated with the practices. Teachers also play an important role in providing learners with multiple opportunities to use these means in ways that help them to develop the competence needed for their own successful participation.

Unfortunately, there is little empirical research that looks at the interactive environments of FL classrooms from this sociocultural perspective (although see Brooks, 1992; Ohta, 1993). Consequently, although we know that much talking goes on in these classrooms, we know very little of the kinds of interactive practices that comprise this talk, e.g. of their constitutive discursive frameworks and concomitant linguistic resources, and of the developmental consequences that are likely to result from learners' participation in them.

The study reported here is an attempt to at least partially fill this gap. Of specific concern is the model of topic development and management that the teacher and students of a first year high school Spanish language classroom discursively construct in one particular interactive practice. First I will briefly explicate the concepts of interactive practices and interactional competence. Next, I will discuss a sociocultural perspective of development in schooling practices and its relevance to the study. This is followed by an analysis and discussion of how topics are discursively established and maintained in one particular interactive practice of a first year Spanish as a FL classroom. I will conclude with a discussion of some implications arising from the analysis and of a proposed direction for future research on related topics.

## INTERACTIVE PRACTICES AND INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE

*Interactive practices* are recurring episodes of purposeful, goal-directed talk which are significant to the establishment and maintenance of a group or community. The means by which these practices are realized include the following: typical trajectories of speech acts by which topics are initiated and

developed, the lexical and syntactic choices that are typical to their sequential and topical development, participation structures including how turns are taken, and prosodic and other linguistic means by which typical opening, transitional and closing moves are signaled. The goals of these practices act as structuring webs around which the unfolding talk orients. These webs are the common ground which allows participants to understand the underlying pragmatic intent of the utterances, and to know what counts as the issue, i.e., the main point or idea, and what counts as an event, i.e., the specific points being made in developing the issue. Thus, they help to set up expectations about what is going on and to place us in a context in which our actions are mutually intelligible. This shared basis of meaning in turn facilitates the development of the ability to make sense of the talk: deciding whether, what, and how something said is relevant and warranted, as well as expanding upon and pushing the talk forward in meaningful, goal-directed ways (Goody, 1995; Sanders 1987, 1991; Snow, 1989; Wertsch, 1991). For example, the utterance, 'What can I get for you?' has a typical pragmatic function, and is associated with a typical agenda or set of purposes, typical contexts, and typical participant roles within those contexts. When those who are familiar with the utterance hear it certain goals, topical conditions and trajectories of interaction are called to mind. These are then used by the interactants to make inferences about the nature of the subsequent talk.

Competent participation in a community's significant practices requires the development of *interactional competence*.<sup>3</sup> Part of this competence includes the ability to develop and manage topical issues in practice-relevant ways. Research on topic management (for a summary see Mentis, 1994) and conversational coherence (e.g., Sanders, 1983; Tracy, 1982, 1984; Tracy & Moran, 1983) shows that competent management involves orienting the talk around a particular theme and rhetorical structure or discursive framework. Generally, we use the initial or opening utterance of an interaction to signal the main point, or topic, and the likely rhetorical structure of the talk (i.e., whether it will be a discussion, an argument, a lecture, etc.) thus trying to construct our subsequent utterances with those in mind. Our ability to figure out what is going on 'topically' helps us to devise relevant next moves and thus respond appropriately to the previous utterance, extend the talk, or detect and correct possible mismoves (Sanders, 1987).

Utterances are judged as being more or less relevant on two levels, local and global. A locally relevant utterance is lexically linked to the prior utterance, and a globally relevant utterance attends to the larger story line or topic under discussion. In general, we are expected to follow a global relevancy rule which involves forming our moves in rhetorically appropriate ways, based on what we think the issue or topic-at-hand, i.e., whether we think we and our counterparts are 'discussing', 'arguing,' or 'chatting.' Utterances that do not make a topic apparent or do not extend it are judged to be less relevant, and the speaker is deemed less competent than a speaker who makes clear what the talk is about (Tracy & Moran, 1983). According to Tracy (1984), when interactants are



unsure of what the issue is, they follow one or more of the following options: 1) locally tie their utterance to some lexical cue given in the previous utterance; 2) ask the speaker what she is talking about; 3) make a vague remark, e.g., 'oh, that's nice'; or 4) respond to the speaker's apparent motivation, e.g., 'you don't seem very happy about it.' Of these only the first violates the global relevancy rule. The other three options are attempts at making the issue apparent when the topical route of the talk, set up by prior utterances, is ambiguous.

Several linguistic devices are used to create and signal both topical and discursive relevance, including the use of opening utterances that clearly establish the issue and frame the rhetorical structure. The utterance 'so what are you doing this weekend', for example, is conventionally used to set the topic as weekend activities, and the rhetorical structure as an accounting of possible events. Also, the use of ellipsis makes clear the distinction between old and new information. As the interaction unfolds, known information pertinent to the topic is generally not repeated, or infrequently repeated so that what is novel or new to the issue-at-hand can be highlighted, and thus made salient to the interactants. In this way, interactants are able to develop a base of shared knowledge about the topic, attenuating the possibility that they will become confused about the issue and thus about how to make relevant moves (Halliday, 1994; Mentis, 1994). A final example of a conventional way that topical coherence is established and maintained is via the collocation of related lexical items, i.e., the use of words that co-occur in issue-bounded talk, and reiteration, i.e., the use of words that have a common referent (Clark, 1992; Halliday, 1994; McCarthy, 1994). Clark (1992, p. 374) calls these lexical neighborhoods and through them we learn to associate words that appear together frequently and, in trying to figure out the meaning of a new word, we use the surrounding topically oriented words to help narrow and refine our possible choices.

In sum, participating in an interactive practice involves a range of competencies, one of which involves attending to and developing an issue in discursively appropriate ways. To do otherwise at the very least engenders confusion among the participants about what is happening, and, more seriously, makes suspect the interactant's interactional competence.

### **Sociocultural Theory of Development and Classroom Practices**

Important to the investigation here is not only what people do when they engage in interactive practices as competent interactants, but how they develop this competence. According to sociocultural theories of development (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991, 1994; Wertsch & Bivens, 1992) our linguistic, cognitive, and social development as competent members of our communities and groups is socioculturally constructed, i.e., "[it] is inherently linked to the cultural, institutional and historical settings in which it occurs" (Wertsch, 1994, p. 203). Through participation with others who are more expert in the use of the

significant resources of an activity one learns to appropriate the skills needed for competent performance.

From this perspective, then, learning leads development (Newman & Holzman, 1993). That is to say, both the definition of individual growth and direction that growth takes are partially dependent on the sociocultural environment in which one develops. This environment includes: (1) the historical and cultural knowledge and practices that are prevalent in and significant to one's surrounding community; (2) the goals embedded in the practices, explicitly or implicitly articulated; and (3) the trajectories of actions socioculturally sanctioned as appropriate options in the pursuit of these goals. The means by which a community's practices are realized are themselves particularly significant to the members' development in that they are the structuring agents of both the form and content of what gets learned (Wertsch, 1991). Also significant, the guidance that is provided by those who are more expert participants in these practices can take many forms, and includes modeling, providing explicit directions, and coaching (Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch & Bivens, 1992).

The development of the ability to interact in the target language is a significant goal of foreign language learning. Toward this end, teachers of these classes are exhorted to provide 'sustained comprehensible input' and to engage the students in 'natural conversation' in the target language in order to promote such development (Krashen, 1989; Hadley, 1993). If learning indeed leads development, and the development of interactional competence in the target language is a significant instructional goal in FL classrooms, then research on classroom discourse must take into account the larger interactive environment of these classrooms in order to discover the practices of this 'sustained comprehensible input' into which learners are being guided. Knowing what these practices look like, e.g., their purposes and the typical unfolding of moves, would help us to better articulate our expectations of learners' communicative development. We could then make informed decisions about what is actually happening in FL classrooms and whether it provides for the development of interactional competence in ways that are appropriate to the learners' social, academic and other interactional needs.

### **INTERACTIVE PRACTICES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE IN A FIRST YEAR SPANISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

The study reported upon here is informed by the theoretical issues summarized earlier, and motivated by the need for empirical data which address the concerns noted above. The question guiding the analysis was:



How is topic development and management discursively realized in an interactive practice focusing on 'speaking' in a first year Spanish language classroom?

## Method

### *Setting and Participants*

The high school from which the data are taken is located in a small university city of a southeastern state. The classroom community was comprised of one Anglo-American male teacher and 15 students. Of these, six were male, and four were African-American (two females and two males). All but one student were ninth graders, and all were studying Spanish for the first time. These students indicated on a questionnaire that was given to them at the beginning of the study that they were taking Spanish because they were required to do so. It ought to be noted that in the state where the school is located, the study of a FL is required only for those who are 'college-bound.'

At the time of the study, the teacher had been a language teacher of both Spanish and French for over fifteen years. He was the chair of the department of foreign languages at the school, and was quite active in the local, regional and state organizations devoted to the teaching of foreign languages. His peers, both native and nonnative speakers of Spanish, considered him to be very proficient in his knowledge of and ability to use Spanish. He was strongly committed to providing a Spanish language environment for the students and to helping them develop their ability to orally use the language. Thus, he spent most of the class time talking in Spanish.

### *Description and Collection of Data*

The class was visited weekly throughout the 1992-1993 school year for a total of 37 visits, 30 of which were audio recorded. Thirteen of these class meetings were also video recorded. Field notes were also taken during each of the visits. In addition to being observed, the students were interviewed as a group on four separate occasions, once early in each semester, and once towards the end of each semester. The teacher was interviewed on six separate occasions.

The audio tapes were transcribed in four stages. Initially, the first 30 minutes of each 50-minute tape were transcribed by a research assistant.<sup>4</sup> These transcriptions were then passed to the teacher. As he listened to the tapes, he modified the transcriptions, adding notes of clarification where he thought they were needed. The tapes were checked against the transcripts one more time each by the research assistant and the principal investigator. The few discrepancies that occurred over what was said on the tapes were resolved through discussions among the three. Where no agreement could be reached, the talk was noted as 'unintelligible.'

## **Data Analysis**

Because of the significant role that the teacher plays in setting up and maintaining the significant practices of the classroom, particularly in the first year of language study, I decided to use this teacher's framing of the data as the official coding scheme. Following the initial transcriptions, the teacher was asked to label the various practices embedded in the talk of each of the 30 taped classes according to what he thought was happening. He used such labels as 'transitioning', 'disciplining a student' and 'drilling subject/verb agreement.' He also indicated the points in the talk at which these practices began and ended, where there was some overlap, and even those places where he was unsure of what was going on.

The main concern in this study is the interactive practice labeled by the teacher as 'practicing speaking'. This was chosen because, according to the teacher it was significant to his goal of developing the students' ability to participate in 'natural conversation' in Spanish. Perhaps because of the teacher's instructional intent, this activity was accomplished almost solely by talk. The use of visual or other aids to move the talk along was infrequent. Instead, it was the talk produced by the teacher to which the students had to orient in order to engage in the practice. 'Natural conversation' was also the most frequently occurring practice over the course of the semester.

After the coding process, the ten class meetings of the first semester in which the practice appeared were analyzed. The total amount of time spent engaging in this practice was close to 30% of the total amount of class time (defined as the first 30 minutes of all fourteen class meetings recorded and transcribed during the first semester). From this analysis a prototypical model of the conventional ways in which topics were initiated and discursively developed was constructed.

## **Findings**

The discussion of the findings focuses on two main concerns: (1) the rhetorical structures which pattern the talk and develop the topics; and (2) the use of three linguistic resources which establish the coherence of utterances. Each is addressed in turn.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Topics and Rhetorical Structure***

The conventional rhetorical structure of this practice is: Teacher: Initiate > Student: Respond > Teacher: Evaluate/Follow-up, a pattern which is reflective of most classroom talk (Barnes, 1992; Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1985; Wells, 1993; see also Markee, this volume). The general set of moves involves the teacher making an assertion and/or asking a related question to which a

student responds. The teacher then repeats the student's response and asks the same or similar question of another student. Two examples of this are contained in Excerpt 1 (See Appendix for English translation).

## Excerpt 1

## Example 1 (from Lesson A)

- 1 T: *es música↓ no↑ música↓ no↑*
- 2 Julio: *no*
- 3 T: *es música↓ . es música↓ . es música↓*
- 4 *ahora señor . te gusta↑ te gusta la música↑*
- 5 Julio: *no me gusta↓*
- 6 T: *no me gusta↓*
- 7 Julio: *no me gusta↓*
- 8 T: *no me gusta la música↓ te gusta la música↑*
- 9 *no me gusta la música↓ te gusta la música↑*
- 10 Several Ss: *I do sí sí yeah sí*
- 11 Rafael: *aw man where you goin↓*
- 12 T: *sí me gusta la música↓ te gusta la música↑*
- 13 Andrea: *sí↓*

## Example 2 (from Lesson B)

- 1 T: *cantar cantar cantar sí sí me gusta cantar me gusta*
- 2 *cantar te gusta cantar↑*
- 3 Mercedes: *sí*
- 4 T: *oh sí a ti te gusta cantar↑ te gusta cantar↑*
- 5 Andrea: *sí me gusta cantar*
- 6 T: *muy bien muy bien sí y Jamaal te gusta cantar↑*
- 7 Rafael: *uhm↑*
- 8 T: *te gusta cantar↑ (sings loudly) ca::nta::r*
- 9 Rafael: *(sings softly) ca::nta::r*
- 10 T: *sí te gusta↑*
- 11 Rafael: *sí me gusta*
- 12 T: *sí me gusta cantar↓ me gusta cantar↓ sí sí*

The typical process by which topics are initiated and developed within this structure is best described as "local lexical chaining." In this process coherence between utterances is created by linking lexical items through the repetition of all or part of the previous utterance. There is no apparent larger topical issue, agenda, or goal to which the talk is oriented. That is, the practice does not begin with the raising of an issue or task needing to be resolved, or with an apparent social agenda, such as 'getting to know each other better.' Instead, in every case, it is begun by the teacher with a question, e.g., *es música*, *no* [it's music, right]

(Example 1 line 1), or *te gusta cantar* [do you like to sing] (Example 2 line 2). The next utterance is either a repetition of the entire preceding utterance or of just one or two lexical items, to which the next speaker may add a different but syntactically related word. In some cases, as when the teacher asks the same question of several students, the three-part initiate-respond-evaluate (IRE) sequence is repeated (e.g., Example 1 lines 4-13). It is this chaining of lexical items which binds one utterance to the next in the unfolding talk, and not any larger topical focus.

The lexical events that are used to initiate and chain the talk are locally determined. That is, they address something to which both the teacher and students can immediately orient. Quite often, for example, the topic used in opening the talk is related to the day on which the practice is occurring. The teacher may ask either what day it is and whether students like that day, or if it is a special day, such as the first day back after Thanksgiving vacation, what the students did during the vacation. At other times, the teacher uses an aid such as tape-recorded music, or a hand-held object to capture the students' attention. In Example 1 (in Excerpt 1, above), for example, the teacher begins by playing a tape of songs by Gloria Estefan. After about 30 seconds, the tape is turned off, and the teacher asks the students *es música, no* [it's music, right]. This in turn leads to a chaining of utterances joined by the terms *te gusta* [you like] *me gusta* [I like] and *la música* [the music]. In Example 2, the teacher begins by lexically chaining to the preceding activity with the word *cantar* [to sing] which is the last word uttered in that activity. In no case, however, does the evocation of these local events lead to any topical talk about them. The playing of the taped music, for instance, does not lead into talk about the tape, the music, or the person singing. Nor does an opening utterance in which students are asked what they did on the previous weekend lead to an expected recounting and/or comparison of activities engaged in by the teacher and students.

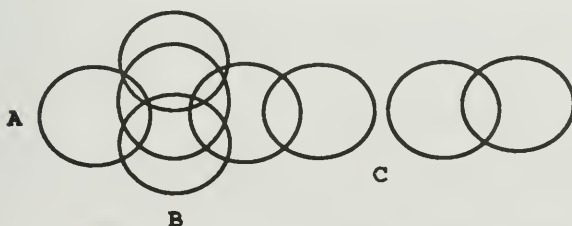


Figure 1: Lexical Chaining



Figure 1 is a diagram of the process of 'local lexical chaining.' **A** represents a forward moving sequence, in which each utterance is lexically tagged to those preceding and following it. **B** represents a repeated-utterances sequence, when the teacher and students are engaged in the IRE-like sequence of 'Teacher: assertion-expressive/related question > Student: response > Teacher: repetition of student response.' In some cases, the next utterance does not repeat an item from the preceding move, but is motivated by some local nonverbal movement such as the appearance of someone at the classroom door, which changes the teacher's attentional focus. This slight break in the chaining is indicated by **C**. The chaining process picks up again after these slight breaks, however, and the ensuing moves are once again lexically linked to each other. As the chaining continues, there is a degree of lexical drifting that occurs, so that during any one class, what they initially appear to be 'talking about' is different from what they are 'talking about' by the end of the practice.

Interestingly, each subsequent time the class engages in this activity, the amount of lexical drifting increases. This increase is apparent when comparing Lessons A and B, which occurred about 6 weeks apart. In the first, up until Santiago makes a move to redirect the talk (Lesson A line 61, see Appendix), the lexical drift across the previous utterances is slight. There are two lexical items, *me/te gusta*, and *la música* that are used as the primary links in the chain, but many of the utterances are simple repetitions. Because there are few lexical additions to these utterances, little lexical drifting occurs. On the other hand, there is much more apparent drifting in Lesson B. The teacher begins by claiming that he likes to sing (Excerpt 1, Example 2, line 1), then chains several lexically related utterances (e.g., I like to sing, do you like to sing). The attention then moves to the display of a cartoon of Bill Clinton playing the saxophone, to the mention of the entire Clinton family, to, finally, talk about Roger, the brother of Bill Clinton. These last utterances are linked to the earlier ones by the use of *gusta* and *cantar* (see Excerpt 2).

#### Excerpt 2

- 62 T: *sí↑...a Roger le gusta tocar el saxophone↑*  
 63 Several Ss: *no no*  
 64 T: *no↓. no le gusta tocar el saxophone↓ qué le gusta*  
 65 *hacer↓ qué le gusta hacer↓*  
 66 Male S: *cantar*  
 67 T: *sí le gusta cantar sí a Roger Clinton es un cantante sí↑*  
 68 Male S: *[ sí↓*  
 69 T: *[ le gusta cantar le gusta bueno*

Beginning on line 70 the teacher inserts a short explanation of the use of *gusta* almost as an aside, but then quickly moves back into the lexical chaining process:



## Excerpt 3

- 116 T: *pero te gusta Monica te gusta comer gatos↑ te gusta comer gatos↑*  
 117 Monica: *sí↓*  
 118 T: *sí o no↓ sí: ok . me gusta . me gusta*  
 119 Monica: *me gusta*  
 120 T: *comer gatos*  
 121 Monica: *comer gatos*  
 122 T: *comprendes comer↓comer↑ yum yum gatos↓ Sylvester Garfield*  
 123 Female S: *cats↑*  
 124 T: *sí↓ A Monica le gusta comer gatos↓*  
 125 Female S: *she likes to eat cats↑*  
 126 T: *sí↓ por supuesto*  
 127 Several S: (laughter, simultaneous talk)  
 128 Male S: *you been eatin cats*  
 129 Monica: *no*  
 130 T: *no ahh no ok no me*  
 131 Monica: (very softly) *no me*  
 132 T: *comer gatos sí. no me gusta comer gatos bueno Monica a mi sí me*  
 133 *gusta comer gatos en pizza↓ en pizza↓ [ solo en pizza solo en pizza*  
 134 Female S: *[ you have cats on pizza↑*

He repeats the IRE sequence of moves with which he began the practice, and the drifting begins again. The utterances are chained by the use of some form of 'gusta' and move from asking about liking to sing, to asking about liking to eat cats (lines 116-134). The teacher then adds to his initial assertion about liking to eat cats by chaining on to each next utterance one lexical item. This chaining propels the talk forward in game-like fashion, and the utterances move from 'being about' eating cats, to eating pizza with cats, to eating pizza with cats and chocolate. The practice finally is brought to an end by the teacher with what is evidently meant to be a humorous comment on the consequences of eating pizza with cats (Excerpt 4).

## Excerpt 4

- 150 T: *me encanta comer pizza con gatos y chocolate sí sí muy bien no sí*  
 151 *the only problem is you get heartburn nine times sí es la única*  
 152 *problema, el único problema eh me encanta*  
 153 *por favor ok*

It is clear that the intended direction of topic development and management in this practice is toward the development of local conversational coherence, i.e., the connecting of utterances via lexical ties as opposed to some larger issue.

This focus is most visible when students attempt to violate it, i.e., when they try to figure out the larger issue to which the utterances are orienting. As stated earlier, there are a few conventional strategies used by interactants to make their utterances globally coherent with a prior ambiguously relevant utterance. They may ask the speaker what she is talking about, make a vague remark, or respond to the speaker's apparent motivation behind the utterance. There is evidence here showing that students use all three, especially early on in the semester, before the local coherence rule is firmly set. In Lesson A, line 11 (Excerpt 1), for example, Rafael appears confused about the discursive direction that the unfolding talk seems to be taking, and asks, "aw man where you goin?" The teacher, however, does not follow up on Rafael's query, and continues with the chaining. In line 34 (Excerpt 5, below) this same student again expresses his frustration at not following the topical flow by uttering, "if you'd speak English I'd understand." In lines 41-42 Rafael finally makes a guess about the topic, but this utterance, like the others, is not taken up by the teacher.

## Excerpt 5

- 31 T: (loudly) *es música de Gloria Estefan* ↓  
 32 Several Ss: (unintelligible talk)  
 33 (T writes on board)  
 34 Rafael: if you'd speak English I'd understand  
 35 T: *sí Gloria Estefan . . Pon Poncherelo te gusta Gloria Estefan* ≠  
 36 Ponch: *sí* ↓  
 37 T: *sí* ↓  
 38 Julio: who's [ Gloria Estefan ↑  
 39 Ponch: [ *me sí gusta*  
 40 T: *sí* ↓ *me gusta me gusta Gloria Estefan*  
       [ *sí* ↓ *me gusta Gloria Estefan*  
 41 Rafael: [ oh that's the person who was  
 42 singing that song that's the person who was singing that song

Other students in this practice also attempt to figure out the issue to which the talk is orienting (Excerpt 6). In line 61, for example, Santiago makes an attempt to contribute what could be considered a topic associated utterance, if the issue were indeed 'talk about artists and their music' when he asks the teacher if he has heard of a particular Spanish singing group. Initially, the teacher tries to incorporate the student's contribution into the lexical chaining process. Rather than respond directly to the question posed, the teacher asks Santiago if he likes the group that he named (line 64). In responding, Santiago does not realize that the intent behind the question is to continue the lexical chain. Instead, he takes the teacher's question as a display of interest and an invitation to add more topically relevant information about the group, which he attempts to do (line 65). This next move of Santiago's, however, has the potential to dislodge the talk from the chaining process.

## Excerpt 6

- 61 Santiago: hey can we listen to some Spanish rap called the  
Spanish (unintelligible)
- 62 T: *perdón* ↑
- 63 Santiago: (repeats the name [unintelligible])
- 64 T: *te gusta* ↑
- 65 Santiago: yeah [ (unintelligible talk)
- 66 T: [ *ah bueno fantástico tienes la cinta* ↑
- 67 Santiago: yeah
- 68 T: *sí* ↑ *la cinta es es la* (goes to get cassette tape) *aquí*  
(holds up tape)
- 69 *la cinta clase la cinta*
- 70 Ss: *la cinta*
- 71 T: *sí::: sí la cinta tienes la cinta de:::* (unintelligible)
- 72 *tú tienes la cinta* ↑ *la cinta* ↑
- 73 Male S: where'd you get it
- 74 Rafael: where'd you get it
- 75 Laura: do you have it on tape
- 76 Julio: do you have it on tape
- 77 Rafael: do you have it on tape
- 78 Santiago: I don't have it on tape I saw it in a store
- 79 I saw it in a [ store
- 80 T: [ *o:::h cómpramelo* ↓ *eh* ↑
- 81 *ok bueno fantástico* ↓

Thus, the teacher makes an effort to bring the talk back under his leadership by seizing on the word *cinta* [tape] and using it in an assertion/question-response chaining sequence (lines 66-72). The students, however, seem to have become interested in the line of possible talk opened by the student and a flurry of moves ensues as they simultaneously try to help the student figure out what the teacher is asking and offer new lines of questions about the music, e.g., where the student got it (lines 73-79). These utterances help to move the talk further away from the chaining process, and apparently out of the teacher's control. In response, the teacher takes the first available opportunity to close down this interactional path. He chooses not to expand upon the information made available by the student, and in fact, seems to brush the student's move off when he says in line 80 *cómpramelo, eh* [buy it for me, eh]. Once he has the floor, he quickly switches into a new practice (lines 81). There are fewer evident attempts by the students to establish global topical coherence in each subsequent practice during the semester.

In sum, the practice is structured much like typical classroom discourse in that the moves are for the most part limited to teacher-initiated utterances,

student responses, and teacher follow-ups. Unlike much classroom and other discourse, however, the process of developing topics is limited to lexical chaining. What most often counts as a relevant next move is an utterance which repeats a part of the preceding utterance and adds its own lexical link. There is no attention to the development of any issue such as 'talking about artists and their music' or 'discussing food preferences.' In fact, student moves which attempt to do so are more or less ignored by the teacher and thus made irrelevant to the development of the interaction. Furthermore, lexical drifting increases over time.

### *Linguistic Resources*

While there are several devices that may be used to develop coherence across utterances, three are of concern here: (1) opening utterances setting the topic and rhetorical structure that will frame the unfolding talk; (2) the use of ellipsis to make salient that which is novel to the topic; and (3) the collocation of related vocabulary items.

As pointed out earlier, opening utterances, in all cases made by the teacher, are limited to commenting upon and asking a question about a local event, e.g., an object held by the teacher, or the day on which the lesson is being held. Early in the semester the students react to these openings as possible topic indicators, and their utterances are usually attempts at making globally relevant moves. For example, in Lesson B, when the students are shown the picture of President Clinton on the overhead projector, many of them apparently think the practice is moving into talk about Clinton and offer potentially topic-relevant information, e.g., the names of his family members, that he is president, and the fact that he had appeared on the Arsenio Hall Show<sup>6</sup>. Each of these moves is tokenly attended to by the teacher with an utterance such as 'sí' or 'no.' At no time, however, does he add to any of them, as he is interested in eliciting the name of President Clinton's brother, apparently so that he can get on with the lexical chaining with which he begins the practice. Once a student provides the name, the teacher immediately moves back to lexical chaining. Outside of the infrequent use of discourse markers such as *bueno* [good] or 'ok' to indicate that the practice is beginning, there are no utterances that are used in any detectable way that make apparent what the topic and its discursive development are likely to be.

Ellipsis is another available resource for developing topical coherence. As pointed out earlier, this is partially achieved by providing enough information in any one utterance to indicate whether the information is new or already known. Once the topic is established we generally do not repeat old information but rather include just enough to connect it to the new topical information being provided. In the practice examined here, there is little use of topical ellipsis. Rather, there is much repetition of information from utterance to utterance making it difficult for the students to be able to figure out 'what is pertinent' or



'what is to be learned' here. In fact, where students try to use the device, where they try to provide a short answer to a question, for example, the teacher corrects their responses by having them provide the already-known-information. And, whether they provide it or not, the teacher usually repeats their answers and adds to them whatever information was left out. Excerpt 7 (below) provides a nice example of this. Here, the teacher asks Julio the question *te gusta la música* [do you like the music]' to which he appropriately responds *no me gusta* [I don't like it]. The teacher repeats Julio's answer in an apparent attempt to get him to self-correct and provide more information. Julio, however, only repeats his original statement. The teacher then follows up Julio's response with the complete utterance, evidently serving as a correction to the student's elliptic one.

## Excerpt 7

- 5 Julio: *no me gusta*↓  
 6 T: *no me gusta*↓  
 7 Julio: *no me gusta*↓  
 8 T: *no me gusta la música*↓ *te gusta la música*↑  
 9 *no me gusta la música*↓ *te gusta la música*↑

There are times throughout the semester that the teacher uses ellipsis in seemingly appropriate ways. In Excerpt 8 (below), for example, the teacher asks Mercedes the question, *te gusta cantar* [do you like to sing] to which she responds *sí* [yes]. In responding *oh, sí* [oh yes] the teacher provides what could be considered an aligning move, a conventionally appropriate response used to signal understanding and the establishment of a common ground. Neither the teacher nor the student, however, makes a next move to extend the talk. Instead, the teacher moves on to ask two different students the same question:

## Excerpt 8

- 2 T: *te gusta cantar*↑  
 3 Mercedes: *sí*  
 4 T: *oh sí a ti te gusta cantar*↑ *te gusta cantar*↑  
 5 Andrea: *sí me gusta cantar*  
 6 T: *muy bien muy bien sí y Jamaal te gusta cantar*↑  
 7 Rafael: *uhm*↑  
 8 T: *te gusta cantar*↑ (sings loudly) *ca::nta::r*  
 9 Rafael: (sings softly) *ca::nta::r*  
 10 T: *sí te gusta*↑  
 11 Rafael: *sí me gusta*  
 12 T: *sí me gusta cantar*↓ *me gusta cantar*↓ *sí sí*

Interestingly, the responses to these students differ. To the first, Andrea, who answers the question with more information than necessary to maintain coherence (lines 4-6), he does not respond with an aligning move. Rather, he



provides an evaluative *muy bien*, evidently rewarding her for answering in a complete sentence. To the second student, whose response is an appropriately elliptic one (line 11), the teacher responds by repeating the student's utterance and adding to it the bit of already-known-information (line 12). Here, it seems that the teacher intends his utterance to function as a model of expected talk for this student.

Occasionally, the teacher verbally prompts the students to respond with the complete, and already-known-information. For example, to his question *te gusta comer gatos* [do you like to eat cats] (Excerpt 9, line 116), Monica replies with a 'yes.' The teacher repeats the entire utterance evidently to get Monica to repeat it as well, which she eventually does (lines 118-121).

Excerpt 9

- 116 T: *pero te gusta Monica te gusta comer gatos↑ te gusta comer gatos↑*  
 117 Monica: *sí↓*  
 118 T: *sí o no↓ ...sí:: ok . me gusta . me gusta*  
 119 Monica: *me gusta*  
 120 T: *comer gatos*  
 121 Monica: *comer gatos*

It seems then that the use of ellipsis to maintain coherence across utterances in this practice is infrequent and variable when used. When some students try to use it to respond to a question, the teacher often makes it clear that the students' responses must include both old and new information. In other cases, the teacher allows elliptic responses.

A last resource used by interactants to establish and maintain topical coherence is the use of related and co-occurring lexical items to tie utterances together semantically or collocationally. There are two significant points to make about the use of this device. First, although there is an abundance of lexical chaining that occurs, there is little substantive topic development through the use of either semantically or collocationally related words. Instead, there is a handful of words that the teacher uses during any one practice to ask questions and make comments. In Lesson A, for example, the four most frequently used phrases include *me gusta*, *te gusta*, *la música*, and *Gloria Estefan*. Few other related content words, however, are used, at least in Spanish. There are attempts by some of the students to extend the talk in English, and in doing so, they provide possibilities for the teacher to make some additional lexical connections. However, as pointed out earlier, these are largely ignored in either language by the teacher.

Second, in many instances the words that are selected to occur together are not those that one would normally expect to co-occur. Excerpts 3 and 4 (above) provide examples of this. In the questions and comments the teacher poses to a student, the terms 'to eat' 'pizza' 'chocolate' and 'cats' co-occur. That their

relationship is not an expected one is evidenced by the initial surprise of the students when they finally figure out what the teacher has been asking Monica, to wit 'do you like to eat cats' (Excerpt 3, line 116). While some students find these connections humorous (Excerpt 3, line 127), Monica evidently does not. She seems almost embarrassed about getting caught expecting the expected, i.e., to be asked whether she eats something that is edible, as she does not join in the laughter and instead very softly repeats the more appropriate answer after the teacher (Excerpt 3, line 131). This unexpected collocation of word items happens regularly throughout the semester.

In sum, the ways that these linguistic resources get used to create and maintain topical coherence in this practice is unlike their conventional use in ordinary interactive practices. In the classroom there is little use of conventional topic openers that make clear what the topics of discussion and rhetorical structure are likely to be. Furthermore, much of the same information is frequently repeated, making it difficult to establish, use and build upon a common base of knowledge in constructing more linguistically and discursively complex utterances. Finally, there is little cognitively complex development of word meanings through collocation and reiteration, and that which does occur sets up rather unexpected connections among words.

## Discussion

In this study I have analyzed the creation of an environment within which students are learning to interact in Spanish. Two related considerations follow from the analysis: (1) what is considered relevant topic knowledge and its substantive development; and (2) the discursive structures by which this development takes place. I discuss the latter issue first.

As pointed out earlier, the typical discursive structure used by the teacher to engage the students in talk differs little from that used in standard classroom talk (Barnes, 1992; Cazden, 1988). We have learned from such studies on classroom discourse (see Johnson, 1995, for a summary) that the cyclic IRE pattern of teacher-student interaction limits the options for student talk predominantly to the speech activities of repeating, listing, and labeling. Unfortunately, the developmental consequences of providing such a limited repertoire of possibilities for students in any classroom are likely to be as limited, as pointed out by Wertsch and Smolka (1993) and others (e.g., Gutierrez, 1994; Palincsar et al., 1993; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). That is, it is less likely that the students will develop the discursive forms and functions for engaging in complex, extended talk about a topic if they are rarely provided with these more complex discursive frames and multiple opportunities for using them. This FL classroom practice, whose primary pedagogical purpose is to provide opportunities for students to engage in talk, is not likely to lead to the students' development of the knowledge of complex discursive patterns in the target language nor ability to use them.

The second, and perhaps more significant, concern raised by the analysis has to do with the students' learning about topic relevance, and about how topical coherence is created within and across utterances. As illustrated in the previous section, topic development is defined and accomplished almost exclusively through lexical chaining in this classroom. There is no overarching topical agenda or issue, social or academic, to which students can appeal for judging whether a move is warranted, or for making decisions about how to expand upon the talk in topically relevant ways. Additionally, there is little utilization of devices which could help in the construction of a shared base of topical knowledge.

The potential consequences of this adherence to the local coherence rule are several. First, the cues the teacher uses in his practice to establish a common object of discourse and reflection among the students, i.e., 'that which is to be learned or accomplished' are not those which are likely to lead to the development of cognitively complex discursive knowledge including rhetorical frameworks for displaying such understanding. Nor are they likely to lead to the development of the ability to use other, equally complex pragmatic skills such as inferencing, anticipating, and building upon presuppositions in the creation of topically complex thought. In fact, much of the interaction makes apparent that the students cannot rely on a set of expectations similar to what they might use when interacting in other contexts, and therefore would do well not to build such expectations.

For example, as shown earlier, when Monica was asked whether she liked to eat cats (Excerpt 3, line 116) she found that she could not rely on her constructed knowledge of the prior talk to infer a likely relevant answer, since she did not completely understand the question. In an apparent attempt to emphasize his point about the unreliability of such knowledge, the teacher first makes Monica repeat the entire utterance of liking to eat cats (lines 119-121). Then, in bringing her response to the attention of the entire class, he conducts what could be considered a public shaming of Monica for her attempt to use what she had learned about the practice up until that time (lines 124-134).

The lack of any larger topical issue to which the talk is oriented also makes it difficult for the students to build topic-related semantic knowledge. As seen in the two excerpts provided here, much of the talk involves a limited variety of simple words used in simplistic ways, a condition which varies little over the course of the semester. Because so few words are used, there is little chance to build knowledge of word meanings through their contextual and discursive placements, or through their connections to other words. Also, the connections actually made are quite often illogical (e.g., lexically tying the eating of pizza to the eating of cats), making it equally difficult for the students to use their common sense knowledge developed from experiences in practices outside the classroom to help make sense of the practice here and become a competent participant in it. The word development that does occur is occasionally cognitively confusing, and almost always cognitively undemanding.



As pointed out in the discussion on the sociocultural perspective of development, learning to competently participate in an interactive practice occurs more readily when the learners know what is going on i.e., the purpose of the interaction, including what count as relevant topics and rhetorical structures, and when the talk is oriented to them. Unfortunately, little of this kind of learning potential is available to the students in the practice examined here. Students are never told what they are doing nor "where they goin'," topically, pedagogically or otherwise. Furthermore, since they never really move beyond the activity of lexical chaining, the learning potential embedded in what they *are* exposed to is quite limited and limiting. The interactive environment, for example, gives students little they can use as scaffolds for the subsequent construction of more complex linguistic, interactive, and rhetorical knowledge. In addition, memory building about what and how something was said to accomplish a particular interpersonal, social, or academic goals is almost impossible. More significantly, such memory building is not even necessary to their participation. Extended participation in this practice offers students very little toward the development of what is needed for L2 interactional competence outside of the FL classroom. At its worst, extended participation in such a practice could facilitate the development of L2 interactional *in*competence.

It may be easy for some in the field of foreign and second language learning to dismiss these findings. In doing so, they may cite either the students' linguistic naiveté and inability to sustain more complex talk, or the teacher's own incompetence as grounds for the kind of talk found here. To claim the first misconstrues the findings on the practice-specific nature of learning. As discussed earlier, what we learn to do in classroom (and other) practices to a large degree depends on (1) what is made available to us in these environments by those considered more expert in the realizations of the practices; and (2) the extended opportunities we are given to develop our own abilities with these experts. Thus, what we learn to do in a FL classroom is partially determined by what the teacher makes available. If the environment doesn't provide much to be learned, there isn't much the students *can* learn. In this case, then, concluding that the kind of interactive environment found here is inevitable and necessary due in large part to the students' linguistic limitations begs the question.

It would also be a mistake to interpret these findings as a reflection of the teacher's own incompetence in Spanish, and to claim that this classroom is unlike most other FL classrooms. My experiences with this teacher and my own as both teacher and student in beginning foreign language classrooms, as well as those reported by others (Hall & Davis, 1995) suggest that this teacher is highly proficient in Spanish, and that such talk is quite common in FL classrooms at least at the beginning levels of instruction, and is considered to be adequate and appropriate. These intuitions and accounts were corroborated by responses from several experienced teachers of Spanish at both the high school and college levels with whom I shared the transcripts of Lesson B. Significantly, all thought (1) the talk was like what they provide their own students; and (2)



the teacher was being quite successful in providing a linguistically rich, and comprehensible environment for his students. The two aspects of the interaction that were most frequently mentioned were the teacher's almost exclusive use of Spanish, and his attempts to provide simple syntax through multiple repetitions. Thus, at least based on own and others' experiences in the FL classroom, it can be concluded that the findings are not idiosyncratic.

I suggest here that a more reasonable explanation rests on the theoretical and pedagogic treatment given to terms such as 'comprehensible input' 'natural conversation', and 'linguistically rich environments' in research on FL and SL acquisition. The theoretical work of Krashen (1980; 1989) on the nature of language development has perhaps brought most attention to these terms. His claims about the role played by 'meaningful' teacher talk in the process of language learning—claims which are partially based on early studies of 'motherese' and child language development (cf. Gleason, 1993; Gallaway & Richards, 1994, for summaries of such studies)—have prompted many investigations on teacher and student talk in L2 classrooms. Relevant to this study is how 'comprehensible input' has been operationalized in those studies. Generally, an input-rich environment has been defined as that filled with such features as semantically and syntactically simple constructions, repetitions, rephrasings, learner requests for clarification and confirmation, and use of back-channels and fillers (for reviews and summaries on studies of comprehensible input see, e.g., Chaudron, 1988; Crookes & Gass 1993; Pica, 1991, 1994; Wesche, 1994). A glance at the excerpts of talk provided here reveals that many of these features are frequently used by both the teacher and students. From one perspective then the talk *is* comprehensible. However, if we use the perspective of talk-as-discursive-practice, and include such features as those used in topic development and management in defining 'comprehensible input', the talk no longer appears so meaningful and rich in its developmental potential.

The concern then is not how we define the abilities of either the teacher or the students. Rather, it is with the features of talk we have considered to be significant to the creation of comprehensible input. While there is a consensus that a learner's linguistic environment is a major contributor to her development, the way that FL teachers realize and define this environment determines in large part what gets treated as significant to FL learning in classrooms. Considering the findings of this study, it becomes clear that providing interactive environments which help facilitate the development of learners' L2 interactional competence, particularly their practice-specific discursive knowledge and skills, involves significantly more than the use of, e.g., simple syntax, multiple repetitions, and clarification requests.

These findings also make apparent the need for further investigation into the interactive environments of FL classrooms. Through more detailed analyses of the various activities accomplished through interaction in this environment, we will probably find that this talk has not one generic discursive framework, but rather that it is a compilation of a wide variety of diverse practices, engagement

in which is likely to produce a variety of quite diverse - and significant - communicative consequences in the learners. Consequently, differences in how FL classrooms define and structure their interactive environments will facilitate the development of different knowledge bases about those environments, and subsequently, of learners with different mindsets, i.e., different social, linguistic and cognitive expectations for how to structure and interpret theirs and others' participation in that talk. That there are different discursive frames, structures and functions to talk, and that there are linguistic, social and cognitive consequences to the varied uses of these resources may be easily overlooked if the classroom environment is defined as one type, e.g., 'communicative' 'comprehensible' or 'naturalistic' and if the features of such talk are defined only in terms of semantic and syntactic simplicity, and the use of simple discourse features such as comprehension checks and clarification requests. Once we are able to determine the kinds of interactive practices that comprise FL classroom talk, we will be able to give attention to devising practices, and preparing ourselves and other language teachers to talk in ways that better facilitate our students' L2 interactional development.

## CONCLUSIONS

As research grounded in a sociocultural theory of development has suggested, and the findings from this study demonstrate, the talk that is provided in FL classroom environments by more expert users of the language can as easily constrain as it can facilitate their learners' L2 interactional development. If our learners' growth is partially defined by what is being provided to them to learn, and we agree that a goal of FL teaching is to help students' develop their ability to communicate with speakers of the language they are learning, then we need to begin to examine what it is we are providing as interactive environments for this development. At the very least, knowing the discursive frames of these practices, e.g., their conventional purposes, rhetorical frameworks and linguistic resources typically used, will help us to determine whether what we are doing is in fact leading to the development of our learners' L2 interactional competence in ways that are appropriate to their social, academic and other interactional needs.

## NOTES

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meeting of the America Association of Applied Linguistics, Long Beach, California, and for the Cognitive Studies Group, Institute of Behavioral Research, University of Georgia, May 1995.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'interactive practice' has its roots in such terms as 'genre' and 'speech event' as used by Hymes (1972), and the term 'practice' as used by, e.g., Lave and Wenger (1991). There are, however, slight but important differences. Readers are directed to Hall (1993) where some connections are made and distinctions drawn.

<sup>3</sup> Interactional competence as it is used here is one aspect of communicative competence as defined by, e.g., Gumperz (1981). A fuller description of its linguistic, social and cognitive dimensions can be found in Hall and Brooks (1995).

<sup>4</sup> The transcription conventions used in the following excerpts include brackets [ to indicate simultaneous talk; : a colon to indicate vowel lengthening; underlining    to indicate loudness; and directional arrows ↑↓ to indicate rising and falling intonation. Lexical ties are in **bold face**.

<sup>5</sup> English translations of the two lessons from which the excerpts contained in the text come appear in the Appendix. In these, utterances originally spoken in English are italicized.

<sup>6</sup> A popular late night talk show at the time of the study.

## APPENDIX

English Translations of the Two Lessons:

**Lesson A 8/30/95** This begins about 30 seconds after the bell rings when the teacher turns on the audio tape and begins to play music. The music lasts for about 30 seconds. The interaction begins when the teacher turns off the tape recorder.

- 1 T: *it's music no↑ music no↑*  
 2 Julio: no  
 3 T: *it's music . it's music↓ . it's music↓*  
 4 *now sir . do you like it↑ do you like the music↑*  
 5 Julio: *I don't like it↓*  
 6 T: *I don't like it↓*  
 7 Julio: *I don't like it↓*  
 8 T: *I don't like the music↓ do you like the music↑*  
 9 *I don't like the music↓ do you like the music↑*  
 10 Several Ss: *I do yes yes yeah yes*  
 11 Rafael: *aw man where you goin↓*  
 12 T: *yes I like the music↓ do you like the music↑*  
 13 Andrea: *yes↓*  
 14 - 30 (same IRE pattern of Q and A continues)  
 31 T: (loudly) *It's music by Gloria Estefan ↓*  
 32 Several Ss: E(unintelligible talk)  
 33 I(T writes on board)  
 34 Rafael: *if you'd speak English I'd understand*  
 35 T: *yes Gloria Estefan . . Pon Poncherelo do you like Gloria Estefan↑*  
 36 Ponch: *yes↓*  
 37 T: *yes↓*  
 38 Julio: *who's Gloria Estefan↑*  
 39 Ponch: *I yes like*  
 40 T: *yes↓ I like I like Gloria Estefan yes↓ I like Gloria Estefan↑*  
 41 Rafael: *oh that's the person who was*  
 42 *singing that song that's the person who was singing that song*  
 43-60 (T plays tape again and asks Ss whether song is in English or Spanish)  
 61 Santiago: *hey can we listen to some Spanish rap called the Spanish (unintelligible)*  
 62 T: *pardon↑*  
 63 Santiago: (repeats the name [unintelligible])  
 64 T: *do you like it↑*  
 65 Santiago: *yeah (unintelligible talk)*  
 66 T: *ah good fantastic do you have the tape↑*

- 67 Santiago: *yeah*  
 68 T: *yes ↑the tape is is the (goes to get cassette tape) here (holds up tape)*  
 69 *the tape class the tape*  
 70 Ss: *the tape*  
 71 T: *yes:: yes the tape do you have the tape of::: (unintelligible)*  
 72 *do you have the tape ↑the tape↑*  
 73 Male S: *where'd you get it*  
 74 Rafael: *where'd you get it*  
 75 Laura: *do you have it on tape*  
 76 Julio: *do you have it on tape*  
 77 Rafael: *do you have it on tape*  
 78 Santiago: *I don't have it on tape I saw it in a store I saw it*  
 79 *in a store*  
 80 T: *Lo:::h buy it for me ↓ch↑*  
 81 *ok good fantastic ↓*  
 (moves into next activity—drilling of numbers)

**Lesson B 10/12/92** This begins about 20 minutes into the class, occurring right after a student reads aloud a poem. One of the words in the poem was 'cantar.'

- 1 T: *to sing to sing to sing yes yes I like to sing I like to sing*  
 2 *do you like to sing↑*  
 3 Mercedes: *yes*  
 4 T: *oh yes do you like to sing≠ do you like to sing↑*  
 5 Andrea: *yes I like to sing*  
 6 T: *very well very well yes and Jamaal do you like to sing↑*  
 7 Rafael: *uhm↑*  
 8 T: *do you like to sing↑ (sings loudly) to si::ng*  
 9 Rafael: *(sings softly) to si::ng*  
 10 T: *yes do you like to↑*  
 11 Rafael: *yes I like to*  
 12 T: *yes I like to sing↓ I like to sing↓ yes yes*  
 13-62 *(T places cartoon of President Clinton playing the saxophone on the overhead and asks who his brother is. While T tries to elicit the name, several students comment upon the picture. Just before line 62 a S provides the name.)*  
 62 T: *yes↑.does Roger like to play the saxophone↑*  
 63 Several Ss: *no no*  
 64 T: *no↓. he doesn't like to play the saxophone↓ what does he like*  
 65 *to do↓ what does he like to do↓*  
 66 Male S: *to sing*  
 67 T: *yes he likes to sing yes Roger Clinton is a singer yes↑*  
 68 Male S: *Eyes↓*  
 69 T: *He likes to sing he likes to good*  
 70-115 *(T spends a few moments lecturing Ss in English about when me vs. te is used. They then engage in another questioning round with 'te gusta cantar.')*  
 116 T: *but. do you like Monica do you like to eat cats≠ do you like to eat cats↑*  
 117 Monica: *yes↓*  
 118 T: *yes or no↓ ...yes:: ok. I like. I like*  
 119 Monica: *I like*  
 120 T: *to eat cats*  
 121 Monica: *to eat cats*  
 122 T: *do you understand to eat to eat≠ yum yum cats↑Sylvester Garfield*  
 123 Female S: *cats≠*  
 124 T: *yes↓ Monica likes to eat cats*  
 125 Female S: *she likes to eat cats↑*  
 126 T: *yes↓ of course*  
 127 Several S: *(laughter, simultaneous talk)*  
 128 Male S: *you been eatin cats*



- 129 Monica: no  
 130 T: no ahh no ok I don't  
 131 Monica: (very softly) I don't  
 132 T: eat cats yes. I don't like to eat cats good Monica I  
 133 like to eat cats on pizza↓ on pizza↓ { only on pizza only on pizza  
 134 Female S: { you have cats on pizza↑  
 135-149 (T continues telling Ss what he likes to eat with pizza (i.e., cats and chocolate). Meanwhile, there is an increase of simultaneous talking among the students. T begins to close the activity on line 150.)  
 150 T: I love to eat pizza with cats and chocolate yes yes very well no yes  
 151 the only problem is you get heartburn nine times yes it's the only  
 152 problem the only problem eh I love  
 153 please ok  
 (moves into next activity—grammar lesson)

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# Teachers' Answers to Students' Questions: Problematizing the Issue of Making Meaning

Numa P. Markee

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*This paper analyzes how three university ESL teachers answered students' requests for help in understanding unknown vocabulary items during lessons that were mediated via a task-based, small group methodology. While considerable individual variation was observed, it was found that teachers rarely answered students' questions directly. Instead, they tended to answer learners' referential questions with display questions of their own, a strategy that is called here a counter-question strategy. It is argued that the use of this strategy for making meaning problematizes issues in the second language acquisition literature on the social construction of comprehensible input and output. Alternative interpretations of the implications of this meaning-making strategy for second language acquisition theory are offered as a basis for further research.*

## INTRODUCTION

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, second language classroom research (SLCR) typically consisted of large-scale studies which sought to compare the relative efficacy of various "methods" of language teaching (see Chastain 1969; Levin, 1972; Scherer & Wertheimer, 1964; Smith, 1970). These early studies failed to establish that any one method was superior to any other. This lack of empirical support for any of the methods that were then current had several important consequences for both SLCR and language pedagogy.

First, the null findings of these studies further eroded the legitimacy of audiolingualism, whose theoretical foundations had already been severely shaken by the Chomskyan revolution in theoretical linguistics. Second, they contributed to the subsequent critique of the prescriptive notion of "method" as a useful construct for either SLCR or teacher education (see Allwright, 1983; Brumfit, 1991; Long, 1989, 1991; Pennycook, 1988; Swaffar, Arens & Morgan, 1982). And third, the inadequacies of the research designs of these studies, which failed to include an observational component to check whether teachers were actually using the "method" they were supposed to be using with their classes, led to the emergence of so-called "process-product" research (Long, 1983) as the dominant research paradigm in SLCR.



Briefly, a great deal of current SLCR is theoretically motivated by the belief that, in order for second language acquisition (SLA) to be possible, learners must obtain input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence (Krashen, 1980). This input is thought to become comprehensible (and thus available for learning) through the mechanism of modified interaction, which entails the use of certain conversational features such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks (Long, 1980). In turn, by modifying their interaction, learners produce comprehensible output, which enables them to "move from semantic to syntactic processing" (Swain, 1985, p. 249; see also Swain, 1995).

The methodology used by most process-product researchers to date is quasi-experimental. It involves gathering empirical classroom data and attempting to demonstrate indirectly that the modification of conversational interaction causes second language development. This behavior has been investigated in the context of five broad categories of language use, which may be called "local practices" (Larsen-Freeman, 1991, p. 126).<sup>1</sup> Of course, as even a cursory reading of the recent SLCR literature demonstrates, these categories are not mutually exclusive and researchers regularly investigate issues which cut across categorical boundaries. Nonetheless, these categories include:

- the effects of teacher question types on student production (for example, Banbrook & Skehan, 1990; Brock, 1986; Long & Sato, 1983; White & Lightbown, 1984).
- language use in lock-step and small group work (for example, Long, Adams, McLean & Castaños, 1976; Long & Porter, 1985; Pica & Doughty, 1985).
- the relationship between practice and achievement (for example, Ellis, 1984; Savignon, 1972; Spada, 1987; Swain, 1985, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, in press; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993).
- teachers' treatment of error (for example, Chaudron, 1977, 1984, 1986, 1987; Nystrom, 1983; Salica, 1981).
- the effect of task type on learner production (for example, Doughty & Pica, 1986; Long, 1989; Long & Porter, 1985; Pica, Young & Doughty, 1987; Porter, 1986; Pica, Holliday, Lewis & Morgenthaler, 1989 (Based on Ellis, 1990, p. 64)).

Finally, current SLCR may or may not be concerned with pedagogical application:

The main aim of some researchers is theory construction. The classroom merely serves as a convenient setting in which to carry out empirical work. Other researchers in this tradition [for example, Long, 1985], however, are motivated by a desire to increase instructional

efficiency, believing that progress is best assured if it is research-led and if the research is based on a strong theory ... (Ellis 1990, p. 54).

In the present paper, I offer what is in many ways a mirror image of the kind of SLCR I have outlined above. First, instead of investigating how teachers *ask* questions, I consider how they *answer* students' questions in the context of task-based instruction that is mediated via small group work.<sup>2</sup> Note in this regard that almost no research has been done in this area—and at first glance, we may wonder why this should be so. The explanation for this seemingly odd lack of research on this topic is simple. Whether we look at the first language literature on content classrooms or the SLCR literature, it seems that, quantitatively-speaking, students rarely ask teachers questions; consequently, there are few instances of teachers' answers to analyze. This unequal distribution of questions is normally explained as a manifestation of the unequal power relationships that obtain between teachers and learners in the classroom (see later discussion).

In the first language literature, Dillon (1981) observed 27 first language classrooms in six different high schools and found 378 instances of teachers' questions. In contrast, students asked a mere 95 questions. A review by Dillon (1988) of 12 other large scale cross-sectional studies of teacher-student questioning behavior in US elementary, junior high and high schools carried out between 1912 and 1986 showed very similar results. The lack of students' questions seems even more pronounced in the SLCR literature. White & Lightbown (1984) found that ESL teachers in seven Canadian high school classes (grades 8-10) asked a total of 1387 questions while students only asked 104 questions. As we will see, the strategies for making meaning that were observed when students *did* ask teachers questions in the data used for this study are also interpretable in terms of unequal power relationships.

Second, although I acknowledge the many theoretical contributions that experimental process-product research has made to SLA studies, I use a qualitative approach to doing process-product research that is mostly influenced by current work in conversation/discourse analysis (see Kasper, 1985; Markee, 1994a; Samuda & Rounds, 1993; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977; van Lier, 1988). The use of such a research methodology allows us to analyze participants' turn-taking behaviors in a way that problematizes an important theoretical issue in the SLA literature: how does the social construction of comprehensible input and output actually affect second language development? Given our current level of understanding of the processes at work in second language learning, we cannot hope to give unequivocal answers to this question. Consequently, my more modest goal in this paper is to analyze participants' turn-taking behaviors in the classroom and to provide alternative interpretations of the implications of these behaviors for second language teaching and learning.

## THE STUDY: BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

The data analyzed in this paper come from three lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate ESL classes that were taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) during Spring semester 1990. Classes were small (10 students in Class 1, 12 in Class 2, and 11 in Class 3). Each class lasted fifty minutes and was taught through a task-based, group work methodology. The interaction among students in each group (which ranged in size from 2 to 5 student members) was video- and audio-recorded. These recordings were subsequently transcribed, based on the transcription conventions found in Jefferson (1978) and van Lier (1988) (see Appendix 1).

All three teachers were enrolled as full-time students in the UIUC MATESL program and were employed as part-time teaching assistants in the ESL service courses, which provide English for Academic Purposes instruction for international students registered at this university. All three teachers were experienced instructors, who had at least three years of teaching experience in the United States and abroad. Two were native speakers of American English, one of British English. All claimed to be committed to using communicative language teaching and pointed to their use of group work as evidence of this. The materials used in the three classes had been developed either by the instructors themselves or by other teaching assistants in the ESL service courses.

In the lessons analyzed here, the topic of discussion in Class 1 was the greenhouse effect; in Class 2, it was the potential re-unification of Germany; and in Class 3, the theme was civil rights in the US. In each class, students read one of several thematically-related readings. They had to exchange information on the content of their respective articles and synthesize this in order to subsequently write an essay on the topic they were discussing. In Class 2, for reasons that will become clear later, it is also important to note that the class was organized into two distinct group work phases. During the first group work phase, each group of learners read the *same* article on an aspect of German reunification. During the second group work phase, the composition of the groups was changed so that each member in the newly-constituted groups had read a *different* article during the initial group work phase. Thus, group members in these newly-constituted groups had not had the opportunity to read each others' articles and had to tell their group colleagues what information was contained in their article in order to be able to complete the subsequent writing task. In other words, instruction was organized according to a classic jigsaw task design (Johnson, 1982).

The tasks analyzed in this paper are "micro-tasks," which consist of oral definitions. This communicative event may be defined as "any turn(s)-at-talk that are hearable by participants as explanations of lexical items or phrases



whose meaning is actually or potentially unclear" (Markee, 1994a, p.106). All the definitions analyzed here occur at nearly identical "decision points" (Long & Crookes, 1987); more specifically, all the definitions analyzed here involve:

- work which is initiated by learners, not teachers.
- work on problem words or phrases that are located in the source readings or in the guiding questions prepared by the teachers.
- work in which teachers are not originally group participants and are invited by learners to join their groups to help them understand problem items (with one exception).

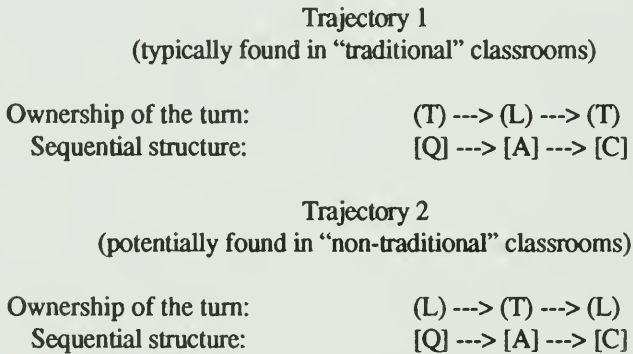
As might be expected, the questions which learners used to initiate these micro-tasks are referential questions—that is, they are genuine requests for new information. They are not display questions—questions to which the teacher already knows the answer—as is so often the case when teachers do the asking (Long & Sato, 1983). Because the principal function of display questions is to require learners to display their knowledge of the target language to the teacher, whatever communication ensues as a result of these questions is an incidental by-product of the interaction.<sup>3</sup>

The seemingly obvious observation that students use referential questions has interesting implications. In teacher-fronted interaction, such questions have been shown to promote more conversational restructuring than display questions do (Brock, 1986). This is important because, as I noted earlier, current SLA theory predicts that such restructuring is necessary for language learning to occur. Learners are therefore spontaneously using a question type that is theoretically claimed to be preferable to display questions as a resource for language learning. Furthermore, since these questions are initiated by learners rather than by teachers, they illustrate a type of task-oriented discourse which is potentially quite different from that normally found in SL classrooms, in which teachers normally dominate the talk.

It is widely recognized in both the first language and SLCR literatures that teachers in "traditional" (i.e., teacher-fronted) classrooms have privileged turn-taking rights. These rights allow teachers not only to select who speaks what, to whom, and when, but also allows them to hold or take back the floor for themselves whenever they wish. These rights are evidenced in the Question-Answer-Comment ([Q][A][C]) sequential organization of "traditional" classroom talk. The turn-taking conventions which underlie this sequential organization prototypically pre-allocate the right to ask questions to teachers and the responsibility to answer questions to learners. In the final commenting turn of the sequence, teachers evaluate the adequacy of learners' answers. Finally, note that whoever does the initial [Q] turn (typically, the teacher) is also in sequential position to control the final [C] turn (see, among others, Bellack, Kliebard & Smith, 1966; Cazden, 1988; Carlsen, 1991; McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979; Mishler, 1975a, 1975b; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975 in the L1 literature. And



see Kasper, 1985; Long & Sato 1983; Nicholls, 1993; Pica, 1987; White & Lightbown 1984; and van Lier, 1988 in the SLCR literature for further discussion of these issues). Thus, as shown in Figure 1, the sequence of turns shown in Trajectory 1 (typically found in “traditional” classrooms) and Trajectory 2 (potentially found in “non-traditional” classrooms) are identical. However, the fact that the [Q] and [C] turns are controlled by teachers in Trajectory 1 and by learners in Trajectory 2 makes these types of discourse qualitatively quite different from each other. Indeed, the choice(s) teachers make at the decision point which follows a [Q] turn controlled by a learner effectively decide whether it is the teacher or the learners who set the moment by moment teaching/learning agenda in the classroom.



**Figure 1. Two Alternative Trajectories for Classroom Talk**

The data-base for this paper consists of 15 definition topics. Learners and teachers constructed 49 definition sequences within these topics. The range, frequency and distribution of responding strategies which the teachers in the three classes used to respond to learners’ definition requests are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that, in aggregate, four important responding strategies were observed in the data (see column 1). However, not all teachers used all of the attested strategies. Teacher one (T1) used three strategies, teacher two (T2) used four and teacher three (T3) used two. The raw scores shown for each class show how many times each individual teacher used each strategy to answer learners’ questions. For example, T1 responded directly to learners’ questions seven times. The raw scores given at the bottom of each column in row 6 show the total number of times that *all* strategies attested *within* a single class, by a single teacher were used. For example, T1 responded to learners’ questions 7 times. More specifically, this means that she responded directly to learners’ questions 7/16 (44%) times, did a counter-question turn constructed with a display question 6/16 (38%) times, and did a counter-question turn constructed

with a referential question 3/16 (19%) times. The raw score totals for each class in row 6 are then added up to yield a total of 47 responses across all three classes. The raw scores given in column 5 show the totals for how many times each *individual* strategy was used *across* classes. Thus, the use of a direct answering strategy was attested 10 times in the data base.

**Table 1: Teacher's Response Strategies**

<b>Ts' response strategies</b>	<b>Teacher 1</b>	<b>Teacher 2</b>	<b>Teacher 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Answer turn</b>	<b>7</b> 44%	<b>3</b> 13%	<b>0</b> 0%	<b>10</b> 21%
<b>Counter-question (display)</b>	<b>6</b> 38%	<b>16</b> 70%	<b>2</b> 25%	<b>24</b> 51%
<b>Counter-question (Referential)</b>	<b>3</b> 19%	<b>3</b> 13%	<b>0</b> 0%	<b>6</b> 13%
<b>Counter-question (text-focused)</b>	<b>0</b> 0%	<b>1</b> 4%	<b>6</b> 75%	<b>7</b> 15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>47</b>

Note: Percentages represent percent of total responses in this column

## THE STUDY: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that the responding strategies most frequently used by teachers are (in descending order of importance):

- 1) A counter question strategy that is constructed with a display question (henceforward, a [CQ] (D) strategy);
- 2) A direct answering strategy (henceforward, an [A] strategy);
- 3) A focusing strategy, in which the teacher directs the learner's attention to information in the source text; and
- 4) A counter question strategy that is constructed with a referential question (henceforward, a [CQ] (R) strategy).

For the purposes of this analysis, I will discard two other minor strategies which appeared in the data—a strategy in which the teacher directs a specific learner to answer, and a strategy which ignores the learner's question—on the grounds that there were very few instances of these in the data. If we now look at the frequency of the remaining four strategies, it is immediately striking that, although an [A] strategy is the second most frequently used strategy observed in the data, it only accounts for 21% of all the teachers' responses in the data. This trend is similar to that observed in first language content classrooms, where teachers (in teacher-fronted classrooms) answered learners' [Q] turns directly on only one third of all occasions (Mischler 1975b; raw scores are not available).

If we now analyze [A] turns in terms of their distribution, we can see that T1 accounts for the great majority of the instances when teachers used an [A] strategy. In fact, if we go back to the transcripts to examine the relevant data from a qualitative perspective, it is evident that the figures for T1's use of an [A] strategy are even more skewed than they might seem at first because five of the instances when T1 used this strategy occurred within one definition topic. The glosses in the margin of Excerpt 1 below identify the function(s) of each turn and may be read as follows: [Q1] = the first question in a sequence; [A]-[Q1] = the answer to question 1; [C]-[Q1] = the commenting turn which closes the sequence initiated by question 1.

### Excerpt 1

- |   |     |          |   |
|---|-----|----------|---|
| 1 | L6: | [Q1]     | what spur means? how do you how do you pronounce it |
| 2 |     |          | s-p-u-r   |
| 3 | T:  | [A]-[Q1] | spu:r   |
| 4 | L6: | [C]-[Q1] | spur=   |

5 T:	[C]-[Q1]	=uh huh, <h>
...		
20 L6:	[Q3]	does it have another meaning too
21 T:	[A]-[Q3]	yeah you know uh on a ho:rse (+) uhm (+) when you're riding (+) you have on you::r (hh) (+) on your shoe a sp//ur// and you use that to:= //yeah// =ok //I understand// //make the horse// go faster <hhh>it comes from //there it's// called a spu:r (+) and so the verb (1) here //excuse me// to spur would be to encourage so is it //a: verb// and noun too yeah= //<hhh>// =yeah a spur (+) //is// //sp//ur= =on your shoe= =is a noun (+) and to spur- it could be to spur or to spur on is to encourage so you pronounce it spur spur (+) uh //huh// //ok// (Class 1, group 1)
22		
23		
24 L6:		
25 L6:	[C]-[Q3]	
26 T:	[A]-[Q3]	
27		
28 L6:	[Q4]	
29 T:	[A]-[Q3]	
30 L6:	[Q4]	
31 L5:		
32 T:	[A]-[Q4]	
33 L6:	[C]-[Q4]	
34 T:	[A]-[Q4]	
35 L6:	[C]-[Q4]	
36		
37 T:	[A]-[Q4]	
38		
39 L6:	[Q5]	
40 T:	[A]-[Q5]	
41 L6:	[C]-[Q5]	

Excerpt 1 is interesting for a number of reasons.<sup>4</sup> First, the [Q][A][C] structure of classroom talk is clearly observable (I will analyze the omitted sequence at lines 6-19 later; this sequence constitutes Excerpt 5). Second, it shows what can happen if teachers do *not* enforce their privileged turn-taking rights and allow the interaction to develop along the lines of Trajectory 2 shown in Figure 1. Unless they do something to take the [Q] turn away from the learner, they cannot control the moment-by-moment learning agenda that develops in the ensuing talk. Furthermore, they expose themselves to the possibility of having to answer not just one but a whole cluster of questions by the learner. More specifically, is clear that it is L6, *not the teacher*, who controls the content of the talk by controlling the sequential development of the definition work in Excerpt 1. This is because L6 owns the [Q] turns at lines 1, 20, 30 and 32. Consequently, L6 is able to lead a total of four [Q][A][C] sequences on the word "spur" in Excerpt 1 (see lines 1-4 for the first sequence, lines 20-29 for the second, lines 30-38 for the third and lines 39-41 for the fourth). And finally, this excerpt is interesting because it is the only one of its kind in the data. This suggests that the definition work shown in Excerpt 1 is



actually an artefact of the clustering phenomenon alluded to earlier. Thus, were it not for Excerpt 1, which seems to be a special case, the use of this strategy would be even rarer than it is.

Table 1 also shows that all three teachers use a "Counter-Question" strategy (Nicholls, 1993) to respond to learners' questions. That is, they counter a learner's initial [Q] turn with a [Q] turn of their own in next turn - hence the term Counter-Question ([CQ]) turn. [CQ] turns constructed with *display* questions are the most frequently used strategy in the data (24/47 or 51% of all instances). While [CQ] turns constructed with *referential* questions are less frequent in aggregate (6/47 or 13% of all instances) and are not used at all by T3, a qualitative analysis will show that the communicative function of a [CQ] (R) strategy must be analyzed in the discursal context of a [CQ] (D) strategy or, more rarely, in that of an [A] strategy (see Excerpts 3-8).

Finally, Table 1 shows that T3 predominantly uses a response strategy which focuses learners' attention back onto the source text. I will not discuss this strategy in any detail in this paper because, from a distributional perspective, the use of this strategy is largely an idiosyncrasy of T3. However, I give an example of this strategy and a [CQ] (D) strategy in Excerpt 2 to illustrate the difference between the two strategies. The gloss in the margin of Excerpt 2 at line 8 means that L7's turn may be interpreted as a commenting turn which simultaneously functions as a second questioning turn.

## Excerpt 2

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 L7: [Q1]      | ok <h> and uh what is a- what is at stake I didn't really |
| 2               | understand this question                                  |
| 3 L3:           | (stake)   |
| 4 L12:          | what is at stake  |
| 5 L8: [A]       | what exactly is //the writer's position//                 |
| 6 T:            | //what is at stake//                                      |
| 7               | (+)   |
| 8 L7: [C]/[Q2]  | li::ke  |
| 9 T: [focus on  | what would uh particularly Martin Luther King say is      |
|                 | at stake  |
| 10 source text] | here in civil disobedience                                |
| 11              | (+)   |
| 12 L7:          | hh  |
| 13 T: [focus on | in his pro-disobed//ience position//                      |
| source text]    |   |
| 14 L7: [Q3]     | //I don't understand// stake                              |
| 15 T:           | //stake//   |
| 16 L7: [Q3]     | //what does// it mean                                     |
| 17 T: [CQ] (D)  | who can define stake                                      |

- 18 L8: [A]-[CQ] stake is something that uh what's at stake wha- what  
are you  
19 going to give up //or (++) how are you going to// get  
something  
20 L12: [A]-[CQ] //what's the point//  
21 T: [C] (what's th-) uh huh right or what is the purpose  
22 ...  
(Class 3, group 2)

More specifically, L7 identifies the phrase "what is at stake" as a problem item in the first [Q] turn at lines 1-2. L3 repeats part of the problem phrase at line 3 and L12 and T3 repeat the entire phrase at lines 4 and 6 respectively. T3's turn is overlapped by L8, who does a first [A] turn at line 5. L7 shows that he is still uncertain about what this phrase means in his [C] turn at line 8, which also functions as a second [Q] turn. At this point, T3 re-directs L7's attention back to the source text at lines 9-10 and 13.

Arguably, this strategy might be categorized as a variety of a [CQ] strategy; however, as we can see from the continuation of this excerpt, the [CQ] (D) sequence initiated by T3 at line 17 and closed down at line 21 is much narrower in scope than the focusing strategy T3 uses at lines 9-10 and 13. T3 seems to use a focusing strategy at lines 9-13 to get the learners to do some cognitively higher order analysis of the source text, while the [CQ] (D) strategy at lines 17-21 focuses only on eliciting the meaning of the item identified as problematic (see also the more detailed analysis of how a [CQ] strategy works that is offered for Excerpts 3-8). Consequently, I have categorized T3's strategy as a separate behavior.

It is clear from Table 1 that the three teachers behaved differently, probably reflecting different pedagogical preferences and/or local contingencies. However, whether we analyze the data in quantitative or qualitative terms, the single most important strategy of conversational control used by teachers across the board was a [CQ] strategy. Two examples of a [CQ] (D) strategy (which come from Classes 1 and 2 respectively) are shown in Excerpts 3 and 4:

### **Excerpt 3**

- 1 L13: [Q1] ... what's that mean (1) coastal vulnerability  
2 [A]-[Q1] (1)  
3 L14: [A]-[Q1] [f]ulnerability is:  
4 L13: [Q2] coastal vulnera- vulnerability  
5 T: [CQ1] (D) what d'you think it means  
6 [A]-[CQ1] (1.3)  
7 L14: [A]-[CQ1] uh?  
8 T: [CQ2] (D) what what d'you think a- where are areas of coastal  
vulnerability

- 9                                   (++) <h> if you think about uh:m  
 10 L14: [A]-[CQ2]           it's not safe[t] (+) areas which are not safe[t] (1)  
                                   right?  
 11 L13: [A]-[CQ2]           it's very easy to be:: (+) damage  
 12 T:       [C]-[CQ2]       yea:h (+) especially by (+) water, (+) by flooding,  
 13                               ...  
                               (Class 1, group 4)

#### Excerpt 4

- 1 L6: [Q1]                   there is a problem here she //doesn't//  
 2 L15:    //(huh h)//  
 3 L6:                       underst(h)and  
 4 L7:                       (huh)  
 5 L6: [Q1]                   and we don't understand what <h>  
 6                               //what means exactly this//  
 7 L15:                       //why we can't get Aus[wit]// (+) oh  
 8 L6: [Q1]                   we cannot get by Ausch[v]itz  
 9 T: [CQ1] (D)               ok (+) what d'you think it might mean  
 10 L15:                       (uh huh) (+) (uh huh //h)//  
 11 L6: [A]-[CQ1]   //it// might [b]ean (+) probably  
 12                               u::h we::: (+) cannot have another Ausch[v]itz again  
                               if  
 13                               uh Germany unites o:r maybe <hh>  
 14 T: [C]/[CQ2]               does it mean that?  
 15                               ...  
                               (Class 2, phase 2, group 2)

The effect of this strategy is to put teachers back in sequential control of the conversation. If, for example, we look at the sequential development of Excerpt 3, we can see that L13's initial [Q] turn at line 1 fails to elicit a satisfactory answer from L14 at line 3 (the trouble-relevant pause of 1 second at line 2 is analyzed as part of the [A] turn because it indicates that neither L13 nor L14 know the answer). L13 therefore does a second [Q] turn at line 4, to which T1 then responds with a [CQ] (D) turn at line 5. L14's indication of uncertainty at line 7 (which is also presaged by a trouble-indicating pause of 1.3 seconds at line 6) triggers a second, slightly modified [CQ] turn by T1 at lines 8-9. This puts L14 and L13 in the position of having to do [A] turns, which they do at lines 10 and 11 respectively. Upon completion of L14's and L13's [A] turns, T1 is in sequential position to provide an evaluative [C] turn which closes the second [CQ] sequence that she initiated at line 8. She does this [C] turn at line 12. The changes in the sequential trajectory of the talk that is promoted by a [CQ] (D) turn is shown in Figure 2:

[CQ] (D) Trajectory

Ownership of the turn:	(L) ---> (T) --->	(L)	(T)
Sequential structure:	[Q] ---> [CQ] (D) --->	[A]	[C]

**Figure 2. The Effect of a [CQ] (D) Turn on the Sequential Structure of [Q][A][C] Sequences**

Notice that the conversational structure of Excerpt 4 is almost identical: L6 does an initial [Q] turn at lines 1, 5 and 8; T2 regains the conversational initiative by doing a [CQ] turn at line 9, to which L6 responds with the expected [A] turn at lines 11-13. T2 then does a [C] turn at line 14 indicating that L6's response is inadequate. However, this turn also functions as a second [CQ] turn, which thus triggers more interaction. This second sequence is discussed in Excerpt 8.

In some instances, a [CQ] (R) strategy is used, as shown at line 7 of Excerpt 5 (which consists of the missing sequence from Excerpt 1) and at lines 3 and 5 of Excerpt 6:

**Excerpt 5**

5	...
6 L6: [Q2]	what does this mean.
7 T: [CQ1] (R)	can I see the sentence? ((T looks for "spur" in the source text))
8 L6: [A]-[CQ1]	sure
9 T: [C]-[CQ1]	it depends on (1) uh::m (1) where was it again down here
10	somewhere,
11	(+)
12 L6: [A]-[CQ1]	it's supposed to be here (+) uh:m (++) <hhh>
13 L5:	(hhhhh) ((L5 laughs under his breath))
14 L6: [A]-[CQ1]	uh:: oh, oh. (+) yeah its here
15	(+)
16 T: [A]-[Q2]	ok (3) to: in this case it's to encourage
17	(+)
18 L6: [C]-[Q2]	to en//courage//
19 T: [C]-[Q2]	//to ((unintelligible)) (en)//courage <hh>
20	...
	(Class 1, group 1)



**Excerpt 6**

- 1 L10: [Q] excuse me what is c-o-r-a-l  
 2 (+)  
 3 T: [CQ1] (R) can I: (+) open //(h)// <h> (++) get an idea (+) see  
 where's  
 4 L10: //(h)//  
 5 T: that <h> ((T reads the source text in L10's packet of  
 materials))  
 6 L10: I don't know whether the-  
 7 (+)  
 8 T: [CQ2] (D) corals (+) does anyone know? (+) where you find  
 corals?  
 9 L9: [A]-[CQ2] corals (+) u- underwater //you mean? under the-//  
 10 T: [C]-[CQ2] //uh huh,//  
 11 (+)  
 12 T: [C]-[CQ2] that's right yeah some-  
 13 L9: [A]-[CQ2] under the sea? in the sea  
 14 ...  
 (Class 1, group 3)

Unlike a [CQ] (D) strategy, the use of a [CQ] (R) strategy by teachers does not by itself take sequential control away from learners. For example, in Excerpt 5, the [CQ] (R) sequence which T1 initiates at line 7 after L6's initial [Q2] turn at line 6 is resolved at line 14, when L6 finds the discursual context of the word "spur" in the source reading. T1 responds to L6's original [Q2] turn at line 6 with her [A] turn at line 16. L6 and T1 then jointly construct [C] turns at lines 18 and 19 respectively. As we saw in Excerpt 1, starting from line 20, L6 is subsequently able to continue asking questions and leads a total of three more sequences which target the word "spur."

However, as shown in Excerpt 6, a [CQ] (R) strategy is more likely to be used in conjunction with a [CQ] (D) strategy than with an [A] strategy. In Excerpt 6, the same teacher again initiates a [CQ] (R) sequence at line 3 in response to L10's [Q] turn at line 1. As in Excerpt 5, T1 again looks at the discursual context of the problem item in the source text before responding. But at line 8, T1 follows up with a second [CQ] turn; this time, she constructs her turn with a display question and thereby regains sequential control of the talk. This puts L9 in the position of doing an [A] turn, which she does at line 9 and again at line 13; T1 then evaluates the adequacy of the [A] turn at line 9 in her [C] turns at lines 10 and 12. Thus, as shown in Figure 3, whereas [CQ] (D) turns enable the person who does this turn (prototypically the teacher) to regain sequential control of the subsequent discourse, [CQ] (R) turns only set up the

*possibility* that the initiator of this turn will regain the sequential initiative in a subsequent turn.

Finally, the distribution of [CQ] (D) turns among participants illustrates the unequal power relationships that exist in the classroom. Learners are not allowed to act like teachers - that is, they cannot use [CQ] (D) turns in learner-teacher talk. Above all, as shown by Excerpt 7, they cannot follow a teacher's [CQ] (D) turn with a turn which teachers might interpret as a [CQ] (D) turn.

### Trajectory 1

Ownership of the turn:	(Speaker A)	(Speaker B)	(Speaker A)	(Speaker B)
Sequential structure:	[Q] --->	[CQ] (R) --->	[A]-[CQ] (R) --->	[A]-[Q]   [CQ] (D) ...

### Trajectory 2

Ownership of the turn:	(L)	(T)	(L)	(T)
Sequential structure:	[Q] --->	[CQ] (D) --->	[A]-[CQ] (D) --->	[C]

**Figure 3. Two alternative trajectories for definition work constructed with either [CQ] (R) or [CQ] (D) turns**

### Excerpt 7

1		...
2	L9 [Q]	there is this e:h (+) some sort of an idiom you pretend to
3		pay us and we pretend to work
4	T: [C][Q1] (D)	ok. what do you think that could be: (+) do you have any
5		idea?
6	L11: [CQ] (D)	do you know what the word pretend means
7		(++)
8	T: [C][Q2] (D)	do I know what the word pretend means ((T quickly
9		inclines her head before speaking; she then touches her
10		chest with her right hand as she says the word "T"))

- 11 L11: [A]-[C][Q2]                      yeah (+) I- I [dawt] (+) I don't know that see  
 12 T:     [C]/[C][Q3] (D)                oh ok who- do- does anybody know what the  
    word pretend  
 13    means.  
 14    ...  
    (Class 2, phase 1, group 3)

Following L9's initiating [Q] turn at lines 2-3, T2 does a [CQ] (D) turn at lines 4-5 which solicits L11 to display what he understands the word "pretend" to mean. However, L11 immediately does what, *to the teacher at least, seems to look like a [CQ] (D) turn of his own at line 6*. The best interpretation of the function of this rather puzzling turn that I can offer is that L11 is trying to tell T2 that it is *he*, not L9, who is having difficulty understanding the word "pretend." L11 and L9 have in fact already done a considerable amount of prior definition work on this item (not shown here) before L9 calls T2 over to help at lines 2-3. L9 has demonstrated in this prior work that he understands what this word means, although he finds it difficult to explain what it means in this particular context to L11. *I therefore believe that L11's turn at line 6 is actually a bungled attempt by L11 to "claim ownership" of "his" problem and that, furthermore, L11 is actually only trying to ask the teacher for more help.*

Whatever L11 may actually be trying to accomplish when he does this turn, the trouble-relevant pause at line 7 and the way T2 says the word "I" in her own [CQ] (D) turn at line 8 both strongly suggest that, rightly or wrongly, T2 interprets L6's prior turn as a [CQ] (D) turn. More specifically, the heavy stress on the word "I" (note that this suprasegmental information, which is clearly audible on the audio tape, is represented in the transcript by the use of italic script) and the teacher's body language on the videotape (see the gloss at lines 8-10) both suggest that T2 seems to interpret L11's turn as a challenge to her communicative competence as a native speaker of English and also quite possibly to her teacher's right to allocate turns as she wants. T2's [CQ] (D) turn therefore requires L11 to demonstrate in next turn that he knows that T2 knows what "pretend" means. At line 11, L11 does not immediately realize the trouble he has gotten himself into and he at first simply says "yeah." However, once he realizes that he needs to repair his previous turn at line 6, he quickly clarifies that it is *he* who does not know what the problem item means in the rest of the turn at line 11. As indicated by T2's initial change of state token "oh ok" at line 12, this answer mollifies T2; she then continues her turn at lines 12-13 with another [CQ] (D) turn constructional unit directed to the rest of the class. The sequence then progresses normally, with T2 in control of the discourse's subsequent sequential development.

On the other hand, it is allowable for learners to follow a teacher's [CQ] (D) turn with a turn that is interpretable as a [CQ] (R) turn, since such a turn does not necessarily take the conversational initiative away from the teacher. For example, the same teacher (T2) who rapped L11 on the knuckles in Excerpt 7

does not take it amiss when another learner constructs his [A] turn in response to her [CQ](D) turn as a turn that is interpretable as a [CQ] (R) turn. To see how this strategy works, let us analyze Excerpt 8, which is the continuation of Excerpt 4:

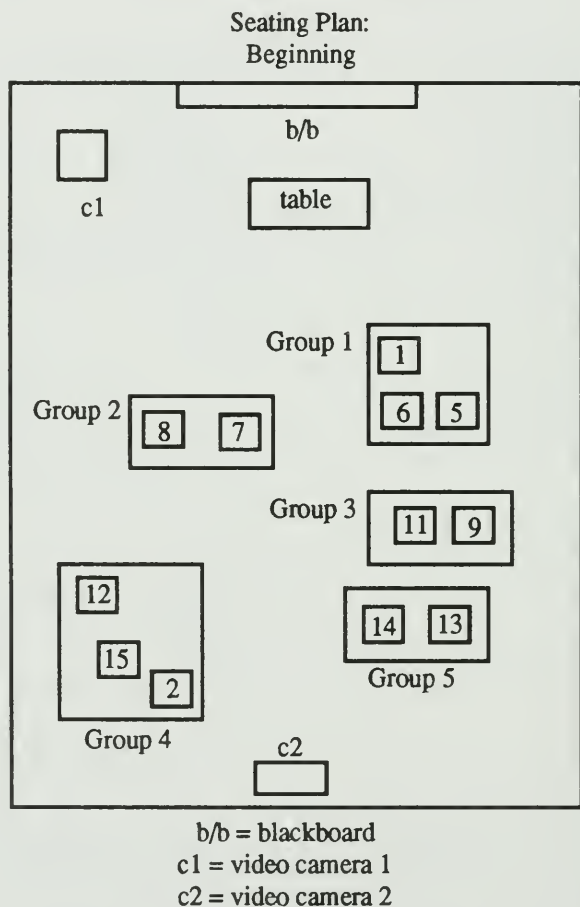
**Excerpt 8**

- |    |                           |                                     |
|----|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 13 |                           | ...                                 |
| 14 | T: [C]/[CQ2]              | does it mean that?                  |
| 15 | L6: [A]-[CQ2]             | I- I //[ni:]-//                     |
| 16 | L14: [A]-[CQ2]            | //do//es it-                        |
| 17 | L6: [A]-[CQ2]             | I didn't read it                    |
| 18 | L14: [A]-[CQ2]/[CQ] (R)   | does //it-//                        |
| 19 | L6: [A]-[CQ2]             | ///I[z]-// I don't know//           |
| 20 | T: [CQ3]                  | //what do you think//               |
| 21 | L14: [A]-[CQ2/3]/[CQ] (R) | does it-                            |
| 22 | T: [C]-[CQ2]              | oh                                  |
| 23 | L15:                      | //no//                              |
| 24 | L14: [A]-[CQ2/3]/[CQ] (R) | //do//es it mean that u:hm //<hh>// |
| 25 | L6: [A]-[CQ2]             | //I didn't read it//                |
| 26 | L14: [A]-[CQ2/3]/[CQ] (R) | that if the uni- if (+) the Germany |
|    |                           | unite again <h>                     |
| 27 |                           | the Ausch[vit] might exist, <hhh>   |
| 28 |                           | (+)                                 |
| 29 | T: [C]-[A3]               | yeah. that's ba- we can't- when you |
|    |                           | can't get by                        |
| 30 |                           | something that's <hh> you can never |
|    |                           | forget.                             |
| 31 | L14: [C]-[CQ2/3]          | right.                              |
| 32 |                           | (+) ((T moves away from the group)) |
| 33 |                           | ...                                 |
|    |                           | (Class 2, phase 2, group 2)         |

As we already saw in the case of T2's turn at line 14 of Excerpt 8 (see the relevant analysis of Excerpt 4), a single turn may simultaneously fulfill more than one discursual function - in this case, this turn functions both as a [C] turn and a [CQ] (D) turn. Let us ignore L6's turns at lines 15, 17, 19 and 25. These are attempts to repair a loss of face, which are not relevant to the present analysis. In passing, notice that L6's claim at lines 15, 17, 19 and 25 that he did not read L15's article is borne out by the fact that, as shown by the seating plan shown in Figure 4, L6 and L15 had been members of Groups 1 and 4 respectively during the first phase of group work; furthermore, there is no evidence in the transcripts of inter-group cross-talk about this problematic item during the first group work phase. While we cannot be sure that students did not



"peek" at each others' articles during the second phase of group work, the transcript of the second group work phase instantiates none of the extended silent "down-time" for reading that occurs during the first group work phase. This strongly suggests that L6 and L15 did not read each others' articles. Let us now move on to analyze the structure of L14's talk at lines 16-27.



**Figure 4. Seating Plan of Class 2**

L14 bids competitively for next turn at lines 16, 18, 21 and 24 and finally provides a definition at lines 26-27. These turns are all geared to answering T2's [CQ] (D) turns at lines 14 and 20; consequently, they may be analyzed as [A] turns. However, note that L14 also seems to construct these turns as legitimate

questions. I submit that the reason L14 does this is because L6 has just suffered a loss of face by giving an inadequate answer. Consequently, by phrasing his [A] turns as [CQ] (R) turns, L14 acknowledges in advance that his answer may be inaccurate and thereby minimizes any potential loss of face should T2 judge his answer to be inadequate. At the same time, he constructs his answer in a way that does not challenge T2's privileged turn-taking rights as a teacher. Finally, notice that, as in the case of L6, there is no textual evidence that L14 had read the original article from which the phrase "we cannot get by Auschwitz" comes: as Figure 4 shows, L14 had been a member of Group 5 during the first group work phase and there is no cross-talk between his group and L15's group during the first small group phase.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING

As I noted earlier, given what we currently know about second language learning, we cannot interpret what these behaviors actually "mean" in the larger context of SLA theory with any great certainty. Consequently, I will limit myself to providing alternative interpretations which problematize the following question:

- how does the social construction of comprehensible input and output actually affect second language development?

There are at least three ways of interpreting the possible effects of the social construction of comprehensible input and output on second language development:

### Interpretation 1

It may be argued that it is acquisitionally limiting for learners not to have the opportunity to take on the leading role in conversation (Pica, 1987). According to this view, the teachers' reliance in these data on a [Q][CQ](D)[A][C] turn-taking system when they have to respond to learners' questions robs learners of the opportunity to direct the kind of modified interaction that is thought to be a necessary catalyst for second language development.

### Interpretation 2

Interpretation 1 represents a *quantitative* approach to interpreting the data analyzed in the previous section. Essentially, the argument in Interpretation 1 suggests that the teachers used "too many" display questions: in order to promote

the kinds of conversational adjustments that are deemed theoretically desirable (Long & Sato, 1983; Brock, 1986), they should have used more referential questions and/or responded to learners' referential questions directly. However, from a *qualitative* standpoint, it is also possible to read several of the excerpts presented in the previous section much more positively. Indeed, I propose that these excerpts show how teachers and learners collaboratively construct conversationally - and perhaps also pedagogically - necessary definitions of problematic items. That is, from a learners' perspective, definition talk is primarily a response to a locally-occasioned communication problem, which may or may not serve as a catalyst for SLA to occur. But from a teachers' perspective, this communication problem presents a pedagogical opportunity for the teacher-as-expert to play a classic "scaffolding" role in the interaction (Hawkins, 1988), thereby possibly providing comprehensible input to learners (see Interpretation 3). For example, despite the fact that participants orient to a [Q][CQ](D)[A][C] turn-taking system during the construction of Excerpts 6 and 4/8 (recall that Excerpt 8 is the continuation of Excerpt 4), it seems that the groups are nonetheless able to construct public definitions of the problematic items that appear to be conversationally adequate. Furthermore, notice that the learners themselves have contributed actively to formulating these definitions. This minimally suggests that we still know very little about the potential effects of different conversational turn-taking practices on SLA. In any case, it is certainly not the case that the only form of language that is potentially acquisitionally useful is "communicative" talk - which, for present purposes, means talk that is organized according to the conventions and practices of equal power discourse.

### Interpretation 3

While attractive, Interpretation 2 raises a number of important methodological issues. In order for Interpretation 2 to be viable, we need to be able to show that the definition work which participants engage in actually enables learners to continue productively with their work. This means that we need to contextualize the talk in Excerpts 1-8 in the larger discourses of each group and class to show what the *consequences for language learning* of the teachers' interventions are. Clearly, it is beyond the scope of the present paper to present all the relevant data and analyze them in the detail that is required to demonstrate what the learning consequences of these excerpts were. However, some preliminary work that speaks to the issue of learning consequences has already been done, whose results I will now summarize.

Markee (1994a) has shown that definition sequences can indeed sometimes serve as acquisitionally useful resources not only for local *understanding* of unknown words and phrases but also for *learning* the meanings of problematic items - in this case, a learner (L10) understanding and learning what the word "coral" means (see Excerpt 6, which is a shortened version of one of eight coral-

related excerpts discussed in Markee, 1994a). As shown in Excerpt 9 (which is actually L10's fifth sequential attempt to understand this word), L10 used the following strategies to understand the word "coral." She used her knowledge of the world to interpret the information she received from her conversational partners during small group work and made informed guesses about the meanings of this problematic item. Following L9's input at line 23, L10 volunteers new information about the color and beauty of "coral" at line 25 and also correctly translates this word into Chinese at lines 32 and 35; she then translates the Chinese word [sanku] back into English for a non-Chinese speaking interlocutor at line 38.

### Excerpt 9

- 1 L10: both of them what they say
- 2 (1.3)
- 3 L10: coral. what is corals
- 4 (4)
- 5 L9: <hh> do you know the under the sea, under the sea,
- 6 L10: un-
- 7 L9: there's uh:: (+) //how do we call it//
- 8 L10: //have uh some coral//
- 9 L9: ah yeah (+) coral sometimes
- 10 (+)
- 11 L10: eh includ<sup>[TM]</sup>s (+) uh includes some uh: somethings uh-
- 12 (++)
- 13 L10: //the corals, // is means uh: (+) s somethings **at bottom of**
- 14 L9: //(unintelligible)//
- 15 L10: //the// sea
- 16 L9: //yeah, //
- 17 L9: **at the bottom of the sea,**
- 18 L10: ok uh:m also is a food for is a food for fish uh and uh
- 19 (+)
- 20 L9: food?
- 21 (+)
- 22 L10: foo-
- 23 L9: no it is not a food it is like a stone you know?
- 24 L10: oh I see I see I see I see I see I know I know (+) I see (+) a
- 25 whi- (+) a kind of a (+) white stone <h> //very beautiful//
- 26 L9: //yeah yeah//
- 27 very
- 28 L10: big yeah //sometimes very beautiful and// sometimes when
- 29 L9: //I see I see I ok//
- 30 the ship moves ship tries ((unintelligible)) I think it was the  
((unintelligible; the final part of this turn is overlapped by



- 31 L10's next turn as shown by // //))  
 32 L10: //oh I see (+) I see the Chinese is uh (+)// [sanku]  
 33 (++)  
 34 L11: uh?  
 35 L10: [sanku]  
 36 (+)  
 37 L9: what  
 38 L10: c//orals//  
 39 L11: //corals//  
 40 L9: corals oh okay  
 41 L10: yeah  
 (Class 1, group 3)

While this evidence conclusively shows that L10 has understood what "coral" means, it does not necessarily mean that she has learned this word. However, independent textual evidence suggests that L10 has achieved much more than local understanding of this word. The teacher instructs L10 during some group work that precedes Excerpt 9 to define this word for the rest of the class, which L10 does some twenty minutes later. L10's public definition which she produces for the benefit of the whole class - "I think the co[l]al is the kind of fossil (+) <hh> fossil at the: botto of the sea. <hh> the: co[l]al reef you are one of the imp- very important, <hh> habitats (+) fo:r fish that support th<sup>[TM]</sup>:m" - may look "messy" - but in fact it displays the classic "An A is a B which does C" structure of prototypical formal definitions (Abelson, 1967), where A = "coral", B = "fossil at the bottom of the sea" and C = "habitats for fish."

Furthermore, notice that L10 constructs this formal definition by "cannibalizing" linguistic material from previous talk. The transcripts show that the linguistic material in L10's public definition that is highlighted in bold consists of words and complete phrases that L10 has lifted verbatim from previous talk - thus, for example, one of the sources for the phrase "at the bottom of the sea" in this public definition is the talk reproduced at lines 13, 15 and 17 of Excerpt 9 in this paper.

Interestingly, with the exception of the word "fossil," which was generated during student-student talk between L10 and L9, all of the cannibalized linguistic material which L10 uses to construct her formal definition of "coral" was generated during teacher-student talk that is organized along [Q][CQ](D)[A][C] lines. However, as Excerpt 9 demonstrates, T1 was not present when L10 first clearly understood what "coral" means. In other words, L10's breakthrough in understanding occurred during student-student talk that is organized via a learner-initiated [Q][A][C] sequence. Thus, while we are certainly not in the position to claim that the use of a [CQ] (D) strategy by T1 *caused* L10 to understand and learn what "coral" means, we can certainly claim that, in this instance, the use of this turn-taking organization by the teacher during her interactions with learners (see, for example Excerpt 6) did not ultimately *prevent* L10 from first

understanding this word and subsequently constructing the kind of comprehensible output instantiated in the public definition that demonstrates successful learning within the time-frame of a single lesson.

While these results are interesting, they are quite preliminary. In a replication study which used the same kinds of definition data and the same conversation analytic methodology used in Markee (1994a) and in the present paper, Markee (1994b) showed that learners may fail to understand the larger discoursal meaning of a problematic item. The data base for this analysis consists of a collection of seven excerpts which document one learner's (L15) attempts in Class 2 to understand the problem phrase "We cannot get by Auschwitz" (see Excerpt 8 in the present paper, which reproduces part of the last excerpt in this collection).

Markee shows that L15's attempts to understand the word "Auschwitz," and later the entire phrase "We cannot get by Auschwitz" are unsuccessful because L15 does not know enough about the Holocaust to understand why Germany's Nazi past might be considered a moral impediment to German re-unification. Thus, in this instance, at least, it does not really matter whether participants orient to a [Q][CQ](D)[A][C] turn-taking system or a [Q](R)[A][C] turn-taking system to attempt to get comprehensible input, since L15's principal problem is not linguistic at all, it is a general lack of familiarity with the topic of the Holocaust.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SLA RESEARCH

In summary, while Interpretations 2 and 3 in the previous sub-section seem to offer more plausible accounts of the acquisitional utility of the data reproduced in Excerpts 6, 4/8 and 9 than Interpretation 1 does, we should beware of jumping to any definitive conclusions about the theoretical (un)desirability of particular question types and associated turn-taking systems. I believe that it is actually still an open question what the empirically verifiable effects of referential and display questions actually are on second language development.

While the learning of a single vocabulary item may seem a relatively trivial learning act, these data are potentially of considerable theoretical importance because providing empirical support for Long's (1980) theory of SLA involves a three-step process. This process consists of: 1) showing that a) linguistic or conversational adjustments promote b) comprehensible input; 2) showing that b) comprehensible input promotes c) acquisition; and 3) deducing that a) linguistic or conversational adjustments promote c) acquisition (Long, 1985). This three-step process has been criticized on the grounds that it is impossible to demonstrate Step 2 (Ellis, 1990). Given the evidence that is presented by Markee (1994a) and summarized here, this is perhaps an over-statement since, if Long's theory of SLA is correct, the interaction in which L10 engaged in

Excerpt 9 can be interpreted as an instance of comprehensible input which leads to comprehensible output and demonstrated learning of this vocabulary item in the formal definition. This is important because these data are, if not the only, certainly one of the very few, published examples in the SLA literature of actually observed talk that leads to demonstrated learning (see also Ellis, Tanaka & Yamasazi, 1994). However, precisely because such examples of actually observed comprehensible input and output are so rare in the literature, these results can only serve as the basis for further research on the putative effects of display and referential questions on language learning.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have shown that all three teachers studied here tended to avoid answering vocabulary-related questions initiated by students in a direct fashion. While there was individual variation among teachers regarding which strategy they used most frequently, all used a [CQ] (D) strategy as a resource for dealing with students' [Q] turns. The observable effect of this strategy from a turn-taking viewpoint was to turn communication-oriented definition tasks initiated by students during small group work into teacher-fronted language display activities that were governed by the conventions of unequal power discourse.

However, the theoretical interest of these data go well beyond the technical insights gained into the turn-taking behavior of participants enrolled in classes that were taught via a small group methodology. These data in fact highlight important problems that must be solved satisfactorily if we wish to construct adequate theories of learning. For example, this paper has shown that, contrary to expectations, perhaps, the "non-communicative" use of language analyzed here is potentially acquisitionally quite useful.

In addition, we must understand that all theories are constructed on the basis of both research and ideology. For example, the decision in this paper to address issues in SLA theory from an ethnomethodological rather than from a nomological perspective is an ideological decision. Theories of teaching are clearly also heavily influenced by different ways of doing research. Furthermore, theories of teaching are often also influenced by ideas imported from the philosophy of education. A good example of such an influence is the widely-accepted idea that students should be encouraged to become independent and autonomous learners.

While I share this ideological preference, it is important to understand that theories of teaching that are based on a synthesis between the kind of micro-analytic research exemplified in this paper and insights from the philosophy of education may well lead us to some potentially surprising conclusions. For example, the use of group work is often justified by communicative



methodologists as a means of giving students the opportunity to interact in a less structured fashion than is possible during teacher-fronted interaction. Furthermore, it is often claimed that group work makes learners more responsible for their own learning.

If we view communicative language teaching as a type of pedagogy in which turn-taking decisions about who says what to whom and when are not necessarily pre-determined (Nunan, 1987), then it may be argued that, in methodological terms, at least, it is contradictory for teachers to use a [CQ] (D) strategy during small group work. As argued previously, the use of this turn-taking strategy makes it impossible to distinguish group work empirically from teacher-fronted work since, *whether teachers consciously realize this or not*, the technical effect of using this strategy enables teachers to regain control over both the content and the trajectory of the interaction. Thus, the use of this strategy defeats the very purpose of using small group work in the first place: to promote more varied interaction by allowing learners to engage in locally-managed talk.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the use of a [CQ] (D) strategy during small group work does not actually promote learner independence because the teacher remains in control of both the content and sequential development of the interaction. Finally, it may be argued that a [CQ] (D) strategy is not "communicative" in a methodological sense for the simple reason that display questions do not promote a use of language whose *primary* purpose is to communicate *unknown* information. In contrast, the use of an [A] strategy to respond to learners' [Q] turns, coupled with a [CQ] (R) strategy as appropriate, seems eminently "communicative" because the *principal* function of these behaviors is precisely to promote the exchange of *unknown* information.

On the basis of these arguments, therefore, we might minimally conclude that, despite their wide currency, "communicative language teaching," "group work" and "teacher-" or "student-centered" instruction are extremely ambiguous terms, which the profession would be well-advised to use with great care. A stronger version of this argument might even go so far as to assert that these terms are frequently no more than fashionable, though largely meaningless, buzz words. Yet, whichever of these two positions we might be tempted to espouse (assuming that we find such arguments convincing and do not put forward alternative analyses of our own), the fact remains that for learners, the "bottom line" is not whether a class is run on "communicative" lines but whether the interaction that occurs in that class is acquisitionally useful for them. As this example demonstrates, it is often difficult to reconcile the implications of ideology and empirical research.

In conclusion, given our current state of knowledge about language learning and teaching, it seems to me that we are only just beginning to understand how tremendously complex even relatively small learning acts are. We therefore need to be aware that any analyses of second language classrooms and any conclusions we come to on the basis of such analyses are open to multiple interpretations. For these reasons, I offer the data and interpretations discussed in this paper as a



basis for on-going research on the following question, which reformulates Step 2 in the three-step program of research originally proposed by Long (1985): "What are the actual, empirically-observed consequences for learning of different types of classroom talk?"

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This contrasts with the focus on global practices which characterized earlier methods-oriented SLCR.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, like many other studies in SLCR, this paper investigates issues which cut across categorical boundaries.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, as Banbrook & Skehan (1990) point out, we should be cautious when we use such terms as display and referential questions. For example, as we can see from an analysis of Excerpt A below, when T2 does her first turn at line 4, she clearly wishes the learner who bids for next turn to define the word "Auschwitz." We can tell this from the subsequent turns that she does at lines 6, 8 and 10. In this sense, the turn at line 4 is a request for the learner who takes up the turn to display his/her knowledge for the benefit of L12, who initiated this sequence with her question at line 3. Consequently, we may analyze T2's turn at line 4 as a *display* question. But L6, who takes the next turn at line 5, initially says "yeah" before he expands on this answer and says "concentration camp." L6's initial response prompts T2 to interpret the learner's initial answer as a response to a *referential* question. This misinterpretation on T2's part leads her to overlap the second part of L6's answer with her first request at line 6 directed specifically at L6 that he explain the meaning of "Auschwitz" for L12. At line 8, T2 issues her second request to L6, which is overlapped by the beginning of L6's next turn at line 9. T2 then issues a third request for a definition at line 10, which this time is not overlapped. L6 is finally able to display his knowledge and does the requested definition at lines 13-15.

### Excerpt A

- 1 L12: <h> Mary  
 2 T: yeah  
 3 L12: what's the meaning of (+) Ausch[v]itz?  
 4 T: d- uhm does anybody here know what Auschwitz was?  
 5 L6: yeah//concentration camp//  
 6 T: //you want to explain it//  
 7 (+)  
 8 T: //explain it to her//  
 9 L6: //Ausch[v]itz//  
 10 T: explain it to Hiroko  
 11 (+)  
 12 L6: uh its a concentration camp, and (+) uh they would send some  
 13 uh (+) Jews there, to (++) to gas them to kill them (++) uh  
 14 during the world war two (+) in Germany (1) I don't kno:w  
 15 I'm not (+) quite sure ...  
 (Class 2, Phase 1 group 4)

An anonymous reviewer of *Issues in Applied Linguistics* makes a similar point when she/he notes:

While the [CQ](D) strategy looks like the usual [Q](D) strategy used by teachers in teacher-fronted classes, [there may be] functional differences between the two. While the usual [Q](D) strategy serves purely pedagogical goals, the [CQ](D) strategy, especially when it is preceded by a [CQ](R), seems to serve first communicative goals. The teacher has first difficulty in answering the student's question because the vocabulary item requested is taken out of context; the teacher requests more context with a [CQ](R), but even when she gets it, I am not sure she has a ready-made definition of the word in her head that she is just asking the student to "display." Her [CQ](D) seems almost like a [CQ](R) (e.g., Excerpt 2, line 17, Excerpt 3 line 5, Excerpt 4, line 9). Her [CQ](D) sounds dangerously like "I don't know the answer so you give me one." Which might lead one to conclude that the terms "display" and

"referential" have to be treated with caution, since a teacher question can fulfill at once referential and display purposes ...

<sup>4</sup> Note that versions of Excerpts A, 1, 5 and 7 have already been published by Nicholls (1993), on whose analysis I build and expand in the present paper.

## APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions: Adapted from van Lier (1988)

T:	teacher
L1, L2, etc:	identified learner
L:	unidentified learner
L3?:	probably learner 3 (L3)
LL:	several or all learners simultaneously
/yes//yah//ok//:	overlapping or simultaneous listening
//huh?//oh//:	responses, brief comments, etc., by two, three, or an unspecified number of learners
=:	a) turn continues below, at the next identical symbol b) if inserted at the end of one speaker's turn and the beginning of the next speaker's adjacent turn, it indicates that there is no gap at all between the two turns
(+) (++) (1):	pauses; (+) = a pause of between .1 and .5 of a second; (++) = a pause of between .6 and .9 of a second; and (1) (2) (3) = pauses of one, two or three seconds respectively.
?:	rising intonation, not necessarily a question
!:	strong emphasis with falling intonation
ok. now. well., etc:	a period indicates falling (final) intonation
so, the next thing:	a comma indicates low-rising intonation suggesting continuation
e:r, the::, etc:	one or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound
emphasis:	italic type indicates marked stress
SYLVIA:	capitals indicate increased volume
°the next thing:	degree sign indicates decreased volume
. . . (radio):	single brackets indicate unclear or probable item
((coughs)):	double brackets indicate comments about the transcript, including non-verbal actions
((unintelligible)):	indicates a stretch of talk that is unintelligible to the analyst
no-:	a hyphen indicates an abrupt cut-off, with level pitch
Peter:	capitals are used only for proper names, not to indicate beginnings of sentences
[si:m]:	square brackets indicate phonetic transcription
<hhh>:	in-drawn breath
hhh:	exhaled breath
(hhh):	laughter tokens

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# Applying Sociocultural Theory to an Analysis of Learner Discourse: Learner-Learner Collaborative Interaction in the Zone of Proximal Development

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*SLA research in the tradition of sociocultural theory examines the dynamic relationship between interaction and acquisition, exploring how language, cognition, and culture are acquired through collaborative interaction. This paper presents an analysis of teacher-fronted and pair interaction involving two learners of Japanese in an intermediate language class, showing learner-learner collaborative activity between two students of differing levels of proficiency to result in creative interaction where scaffolding creates a positive environment for L2 acquisition. Learner use of Japanese in pair work is strikingly different from that in teacher-fronted practice, with learners becoming highly interactive and using the L2 for a variety of purposes, including 1) hypothesis-testing through language play, 2) talk about the here-and-now, 3) lexical experimentation, 4) modulating the pace of interaction, 5) repair, 6) negotiating roles 7) managing tasks, and 8) humor. Contribution of learner strengths and weaknesses results in refinement of both learners' L2 use, with both students learning and progressing through collaborative interaction in the zone of proximal development (ZPD).*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the results of a qualitative case study of teacher-fronted and pair work interaction involving two intermediate<sup>1</sup> learners of Japanese, investigating how L2 development is constituted by learners in these contexts. Analysis reveals how collaborative interaction in a learner-learner role play task results in increased accuracy in L2 use, and provides evidence that not only can a learner with weaker L2 skills benefit by working with a more advanced learner, but that the more advanced learner can also benefit from interaction with a learner less proficient in the L2 as learner strengths are collaboratively joined. These results support the importance of cooperative learning opportunities as providing a place for L2 acquisition for learners in the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

## THEORETICAL ISSUES IN EXAMINING LEARNER-LEARNER INTERACTION

### Sociocultural Theory and SLA

Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Newman & Holzman, 1993; Lantolf, 1994) provides a window into language acquisition that is useful in considering the relationship between social interaction and language development. Sociocultural theory is radically different from other psycholinguistic and SLA theories in that social settings and psycholinguistic processes are not considered to be separate phenomenon, but processes which mutually constitute one another. For SLA researchers working within a sociocultural theoretical framework, second language acquisition research methodology is based upon the understanding that socialization and language acquisition cannot be separated from the interactive linguistic contexts in which they occur. Vygotskian psychologists Newman & Holzman (1993) have noted the "contradictory nature" of language development which arises from the fact that language development and interaction are interwoven into a single fabric of human development:

The contradictory nature of language development is that the process of becoming a language user—by and large, the process of participating in societally determined fixed verbal intercourse . . .—occurs through the child's manifest ability to make meaning. (p. 87-88)

For L2 learners as well, this relationship between acquisition and speaking holds—L2 development progresses through the process of social interaction where the learner is an active participant in the meaning-making process through which the learner acquires the L2.<sup>2</sup> New research in SLA on language play (Lantolf, 1995; Coughlan, this volume) supports the importance of participating in meaning-making activity. For example, participation in conversation practice has a greater impact on SLA processes as evidenced through subsequent language play than do classroom drills, L2 reading, or studying grammar (Lantolf, 1995).

### Previous Studies of Learner Interaction

The dominant theories of L2 acquisition do not acknowledge the constitutive relationship between language development and social interaction, but view the L2 which the learner encounters as *input*. Research done in this vein focuses upon learner negotiation, which consists of linguistic and interactional strategies learners have been shown to use to achieve modified input that is easier to understand. Negotiation strategies studied include clarification requests and comprehension checks used by learners, and the resulting simplified input is

posited to function as *intake* for acquisition of the L2 (Pica, 1994; Long, 1985; Varonis & Gass, 1982). This view sees acquisition processes as linear—input is negotiated and becomes intake for SLA. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) argues that L2 acquisition takes place as learners comprehend input that is slightly beyond their own level of development. This work has inspired a series of studies on input such as those cited above, which show that learners have higher comprehension of input when they have the opportunity to interact with the person providing that input. For example, when comparing comprehension of unmodified input, input modified to be easier to understand (containing redundancy and syntactic simplification, for example), and 'negotiated' input in which the learner may freely interact with his or her interlocutor, comprehension has been shown to be highest under the 'negotiated input' condition (Pica, 1987; Chaudron, 1983). In these studies, language is viewed as separate from its sociocultural context, as a culturally and affectively neutral bearer of propositional content.<sup>3</sup> While these studies do indicate the importance of interaction in SLA, they tend to utilize experimental settings, with 'interaction' being what occurs during completion of experimental tasks assigned by the researcher; interaction is considered in terms of negotiation of input, and is seen as important because it facilitates comprehension of input (see Pica, 1994 for a review of this research).

Recently, however, there has been growing interest in SLA circles in the impact of peer interaction on classroom L2 acquisition, with studies being done which compare learner language generated by pair interactive tasks with that occurring during teacher-fronted activities (Pica & Doughty, 1986; Roberts,<sup>4</sup> 1995; Deen, 1991). Through quantitative analyses of learner language, Pica & Doughty, Roberts, and Deen find that language in learner-learner interaction is either more grammatical (Deen, 1991; Roberts, 1995) or less grammatical (Pica & Doughty, 1986) than that in teacher-fronted activities. All three studies report that learners have more opportunities both to speak and to negotiate in peer interactive settings, and note that learner-learner interaction affords more opportunity for self- and other-correction than does teacher-fronted activity. Qualitative analysis (Deen, 1991; Roberts, 1995) shows learners supporting each other through corrective feedback. This classroom research reveals the potential of learner-learner interactive activity for promoting L2 acquisition. However, because language and interaction are not viewed as revealing learner cognitive processes, this work does not investigate learner language for evidence of how L2 development proceeds through and is constituted by meaning-making activity (Hall & Brooks, 1995).

## **A Sociocultural Approach to Learner-Learner Interaction**

Research in the tradition of sociocultural theory approaches learner-learner interaction from a different perspective. When applied to second language acquisition, sociocultural theory reveals the richness of learner language and



provides a window into how language is acquired through collaborative interaction (Donato, 1988; 1994). Studies utilizing a sociocultural framework have examined cooperative learning (Slavin, 1984; 1991), an approach to learning believed to be beneficial to L2 acquisition (McGroarty, 1989; Bejarano, 1987; McGuire, 1992; Milleret, 1992; Freeman, 1993). Results reveal how cooperative learning activities allow learners to incorporate their own cultural and social identities into academic tasks in a way that supports the acquisition of the L2 (Duran & Szymanski, 1993; 1995). When the framework of sociocultural theory is utilized in research on L2 interaction, analysis moves beyond properties of individual learner language to examination of the creation of context, construction of task, coordination of goals, affective variables, learner cognition, and learner collaboration in order to better understand how learners socially construct the shared understandings through which language is acquired (Brooks & Donato, 1995; Duff & Coughlan, 1994; Lantolf, 1995). The present paper is situated within this research paradigm, and contributes to our understanding of classroom language learning processes through its examination of learner-learner interaction from a sociocultural perspective, regarding social interaction and SLA as mutually constituting one another, with language development proceeding through an active process of L2 use for meaning-making in interaction as learners support each other collaboratively.

### **The Zone of Proximal Development in SLA**

The zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1987; Newman & Holzman, 1993) is the interactively constituted social and cognitive place where language development occurs as learners participate in meaning-making activities with others—where language learning is a process of discovery-in-use. The ZPD as defined by Vygotsky (1978) is

the difference between the child's developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86).

While developed to examine the cognitive development<sup>5</sup> of children, the conception of the ZPD is useful for analysis of SLA processes as well. For SLA purposes, I would like to conceptualize the ZPD as the difference between the L2 learner's developmental level as determined by independent language use, and the higher level of potential development as determined by how language is used in collaboration with a more capable interlocutor. Considered from the perspective of the ZPD, L2 learner-learner interaction is not simply a place for negotiation of meaning, but for collaborative construction of and engagement in activities between novice and expert—these are the very activities which constitute learning. L2 acquisition takes place as the gap between what the

learner can do alone and with assistance is filled through collaboration. Researchers working with the ZPD have called this assistance *scaffolding* (Wood et. al., 1976; Clay & Cazden, 1990; Rogoff & Gardner, 1984). Donato (1994), has described how scaffolding takes place when learners do small-group interactive planning tasks. In his analysis, the locus of scaffolding can not be attributed to any one group member. Instead, the group of learners working together create a collaborative scaffold as the learners contribute their strengths to problem-solving activity.

Rather than analyzing learner language for evidence of negotiation of propositional content, examining learner interaction in the ZPD provides a richer view of L2 development, allowing the researcher to examine what learners are able to do with language and how language development occurs in turn by turn interaction. This view takes into account the importance of meaning making output (Swain, 1993; 1995) for L2 acquisition. Language acquisition cannot be separated from the making of meaning which constitutes social interaction.

Opportunities for learners to participate in learner-learner interaction are increasing in the L2 classroom, with teachers being encouraged to increase the use of pair and group work in the classroom (Kramsch, 1987; Rivers, 1987; Long & Porter, 1985). Group and pair work provide learners the opportunity to engage in meaningful interaction, and to link L2 meanings to social context as they are given the opportunity to create with language in given contexts. Unlike NS-NNS<sup>6</sup> interaction in which there is a clear expert,<sup>7</sup> the roles of novice and expert are fluid and changing in learner-learner interaction as the learners contribute their individual differences in matured and maturing skills. Additionally, the learners' potential for accomplishments beyond their individual abilities increases when their strengths are collaboratively joined.

## **Language Socialization Theory and L2 Development**

Language Socialization Theory applies sociocultural theory and the notion of activity (Leontiev 1981) in examining the cultural and linguistic development of children, focusing upon the importance of expert-novice interaction as children are socialized through language to become members of their communities (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; 1986). While developed to examine how children acquire their L1, Language Socialization Theory has recently been applied to L2 classroom contexts as well (Hall, 1995; Poole, 1992; Ohta, 1993; 1994; 1995a; 1995b). In first-language acquisition contexts, experts socialize novices to use language to create culturally appropriate meanings, with this socialization taking place through the use of the language being acquired (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). The novice is not a passive recipient of knowledge (Ochs, 1990), but an active co-constructor of shared understandings in interaction with both cultural experts and peers. Through the discursive process of expert-novice interaction, novices develop sociocultural competence by establishing links between language and

social context in turn by turn interaction, with the novice being guided through the interaction itself into culturally appropriate social norms of language use.

Like first language acquisition, SLA is embedded in richly social contexts of human interaction. Research in the area of second language acquisition is beginning to take social context and interactional goals into account when examining L2 acquisition processes. However, the context of L2 acquisition may differ drastically from that experienced by children acquiring their L1. When SLA occurs in a classroom context, L2 learners have little opportunity for interaction with target natives or near-natives in natural contexts (Hall, 1995; Ohta, 1993; 1994), and are at risk of being socialized into interactive styles inappropriate for communication within the L2 community. For example, in classrooms learner participation in interaction is often restricted to the 'response' turn of the IRF<sup>8</sup> (Initiation/Response/Follow-up) elicitation activity (Ohta, 1993; 1994; 1995a; Mehan, 1985). This pattern of interaction has little value in preparing learners to interact in the real world, not only because learners are limited to being 'responders,' but also because the question/answer style IRF-dominated classroom discourse little resembles natural conversation (Hall, 1995; Ohta, 1993; 1994; 1995a; 1995b). In addition, in the traditional teacher-fronted classroom, classroom roles are defined by the teacher with learners generally unable to use the L2 in ways they will need outside of the classroom—to negotiate their own roles, manage their own activities, collaborate with others, or to use their emerging language skills for conversation not structured by teacher or textbook. In some Japanese classrooms learner language is rigidly controlled with the goals of reducing learner errors and creating links between language and social context (Jorden & Noda, 1987; Roberts, 1995). However, reports of increases in language play<sup>9</sup> following conversation practice as compared to controlled drills (Lantolf, 1995) provide evidence that rigid control of learner language may not be as productive for L2 acquisition as activities where learners are freer to use the L2 for creative meaning making.

## A STUDY OF SITUATED CLASSROOM INTERACTION

The purpose of the present research is to learn more about how SLA occurs through learner participation in interactive classroom contexts. Analysis of teacher-fronted and pair work interaction in a natural classroom setting provides evidence of how pair work functions in the L2 acquisition of two learners. Building on Donato (1994) who expands the notion of scaffolding to collaborative learning in groups, this paper examines how scaffolding occurs in a learner-learner pair, specifically inquiring as to how scaffolding might function in pair activity between learners with differing levels of L2 proficiency.

In classrooms where pair work is used, expert-novice roles are at first clearly defined, as the teacher-expert sets up the pair activity, exercising control over the



classroom interaction in a teacher-fronted setting. The teacher creates the context and task design, and exercises a level of control over the appropriateness of the language being produced when the learners work in pairs. Once pair work actually begins, however, another set of classroom roles comes into being. Within the individual pairs new roles must be co-constructed by the learners themselves through language in turn-by-turn interaction, with the roles created depending upon personalities and language proficiencies of the pair members as well as any roles defined for use within the particular task. The teacher remains in the role of teacher-expert, but the role changes subtly as the teacher ceases to be the allocator of turns, and gives a measure of control over to the learners. The teacher takes on a new, support role, moving about the classroom offering assistance to pairs.

## **The Data**

The present data consist of video and audio-recordings of a 100-minute second-year university-level Japanese class at an urban American state university. There were seven students enrolled in the course, with six present the day of data collection. The video camera was positioned to record learner interaction and activity, with microphones for audio recording attached to the video camera at the front of the classroom and to Becky, a student volunteer. Clipping a microphone to Becky enabled collection of interaction during pair work. The teacher taught her class as usual, and did not revise her planned activities or methodology for the purposes of the research being conducted. Pair work was incorporated into classes on a daily basis, with learner pairings varying from day to day, and sometimes from activity to activity, with the result that each learner had the opportunity to work with all other class members. On the date of data collection, teacher was instructed to pair learners as she usually did. Prior to the class, one learner indicated that due to the data collection process he did not want to be paired with Becky. The teacher respected this learner's wish when she formed pairs.

## **Analysis**

Analysis focuses on an instructional sequence consisting of a pair role play activity and the teacher-fronted activities which introduced and followed it (about 30 consecutive minutes of classroom activity). The activity was transcribed for analysis with reference to audio recordings of data collected via Becky's microphone as well as video recordings of the entire class. The focus of instruction during this sequence was the teaching of polite requests through teacher-fronted and role play activities. Analysis focused on the role of scaffolding in classroom interaction, specifically looking at the following: 1) how setting (teacher-fronted work or pair work) and interlocutor (teacher or another learner) impact learner language use; 2) the occurrence of peer



scaffolding and its functions; 3) the function of Japanese used in pair work; 4) how errors are handled; 5) the construction of novice-expert roles in learner-learner interaction; and 6) any learner gains which might result from interaction with a peer.

Analysis of the data focuses upon Becky (age 20) and Mark (age 27), Becky's partner for the role play activity. The particular pairing of Becky and Mark provided the opportunity to examine how collaboration and scaffolding function in an asymmetrical pairing of a learner with weaker language skills (Mark) with a learner of higher L2 proficiency (Becky). Observations of Becky and Mark's classes as well as interviews in Japanese between both learners and the researcher<sup>10</sup> reveal that these two learners are very different in terms of what they can do with Japanese. While Becky actively experiments with Japanese and is able to express herself in the L2 at a level that might be expected from a second year student, Mark's progress is slower. Having taken a year off between first and second year Japanese, Mark struggles not only to put together sentences, but even to recall basic lexical items. Becky expresses herself with fluency, while Mark struggles with words.

### Mark & Becky's Language Use in Teacher-Fronted vs. Pair Work Settings

In the present data, the teacher is teaching learners how to make polite requests using the humble verb *itadaku* in Japanese. Through creation of a situation in which a student makes a request of a teacher, the teacher provides a context for learners to make connections between the word *itadaku* and the social context it indexes: interaction with a person of higher status than the speaker. The expression taught '*te*-form verb + *itadakitai n desu ga*,' is formulaic in nature, and works as an interactional routine. The teacher begins this portion of the lesson in teacher-fronted preparation for pair work during which she introduces the target request, provides a context for using the language taught, maps out the interaction and key phrases on the blackboard and practices with the class by asking questions to be answered using the target request. During this phase, the teacher controls the allocation of turns as she asks '*Tanjoobi ni sensei ni nani o shite itadakitai desu ka*' (What would you like the teacher to do for you for your birthday?). The teacher asks learners to think of what they might like. In this first excerpt below, she directs her questions to John and Mark. Hal, another learner, actively offers his own ideas, prompting Mark to come up with something.

- 1) 1 T: John-san, Mark-san, nani ka arimasu ka?  
*John, Mark, do you have anything ((you'd like to have))?*
- 2 M: Arimasu ka, arimasu ka? Chotto (.) ((scratching head))  
*Is there anything, is there anything? I'm not sure (.)*  
*((scratching head))*
- 3 T: Nani ka kangaete kudasai.  
*Please think of something.*
- 4 H: ((to Mark)) Okane ga ii desu yo.  
*Money would be good.*
- 5 T: Un.  
*Uh huh*
- 6 M: iie iie iie iie iie.  
*No no no no no*
- 7 T: Nan demo ii desu yo.  
*Anything is okay.*
- 8 H: Tokei? Tokei?  
*A watch? A watch?*
- 9 T: Tokei?  
*A watch?*
- > 10 M: Chocolate. ((word said in English))
- 11 T: Chokoreeto?  
*Chocolate?*
- > 12 H: Chokoreeto. Chokoreeto o  
*Chocolate. Chocolate ((topic marker))*
- > 13 M: Chokoreeto o ssss um o (.) okuri?// okuri?// okutte?//  
*Chocolate ssss um (.) send? send? send?<sup>11</sup>*
- 14 T: un. un. un.  
*uh huh. uh huh. uh huh.*

- > 15 M: okutte itadakitai n desu ga.  
*Would you send me?* <sup>12</sup>
- 16 T: Ii desu yo. Wakarimashita. A^ Mark-san, chokoreeto ga  
suki desu ka?  
*Sure. I understand. Oh^Mark, you like chocolate?*
- 17 M: Hai, suki desu.  
*Yes, I do.*

During interaction with the teacher, Mark refers to the board (where the teacher has written a model of the target request) for help with the expression he is formulating, and correctly makes a polite request of the teacher. Note Hal's prompting of Mark in line 12, where he begins to construct a request using 'chocolate,' adding the topic marker 'o' needed to make such a request. In line 13, Mark picks up on Hal's prompting, and works to formulate the request. He also comes up with the appropriate form of the verb *okuru* in line 13 on his third repetition of the verb, with the encouragement of the teacher (line 14) who accepts his first two (incorrect) formulations. Mark's participation in teacher-fronted practice is limited to these turns where he responds to initiations by the teacher and Hal.

Becky's participation in teacher-fronted practice is even more limited than Mark's. While Mark works to form a request with the help of the teacher and Hal, Becky simply answers *nandemo ii* [anything is fine].

- 2) 1 T: Becky-san, nani ga ii desu ka?  
*So Becky, what would you like?*
- 2 B: Nandemo ii desu.  
*Anything is okay.*
- 3 T: ((laughing)) Nandemo ii? Onegai shite kudasai ne:: Hai.  
((laughing)) Anything? *Make a request please:: Okay.*

Those of us who have been students in U.S. classrooms recognize Becky's strategy as a safe response—this is part and parcel of U.S. classroom culture. As indicated by the teacher's third-turn follow-up to Becky's response, what the teacher really wants is Becky to make a request. However, she does not guide Becky to do so, and the exchange stops here. While the teacher has control of the interaction through the allocation of turns, Becky exercises her own control of the situation through a short, safe response that is appropriate to the classroom culture and succeeds in deflecting teacher attention to another learner. Becky completes her turn without any risk of error or embarrassment in front of the class, neither attempting to use the target structure nor trying to experiment

with using Japanese. Both Mark and Becky's participation in teacher-fronted work is confined to the response turn. Neither uses Japanese for any other purpose than to respond to the teacher or Hal. However, they, handle the teacher-fronted portion of this activity very differently—Mark both comes up with an item he'd like to ask for (excerpt 1, line 5), and works to formulate the appropriate request targeted by the teacher (lines 8-10), while Becky works to avoid doing so.

After teacher-fronted question/answer work, the teacher sets up a role play activity and provides a context for learners to use the target request form. Learners are to play the role of 'teacher' and 'student,' with the 'student' politely asking a favor of the 'teacher' who may comply or refuse. The learners use exaggeration to create humorous content as they manipulate the culturally Japanese interactional routine which involves use of a humble form when talking to a superior.

Both Becky and Mark's use of Japanese in pair work is strikingly different from that used in teacher-fronted practice. In contrast to the teacher-fronted Q/A session shown in Excerpt 1 where Becky produced very little language, giving the safe answer *nandemo ii* [anything is fine], Becky becomes highly interactive in the role play activity. No longer on display in front of the class or locked into language production controlled by the teacher's allocation of turns, Becky and her partner Mark actively use Japanese to both regulate and perform the assigned task, injecting their own brand of humor as they go along. Even though the teacher is present during the beginning of pair role play practice before moving on to another pair, the teacher's new role as supportive 'coach' frees Becky to use much more language in this new configuration than she did when on display in front of the class. Mark, whose participation was limited to the response turn in teacher-fronted practice, uses Japanese effectively for regulatory functions (lines 1, 3, 5), as Becky takes control of the interaction by choosing her own role in line 6:

- 3a)        1        M: Suwatte kudasai.  
                      *Please sit down.*
- 2        B: Hai. ((E adjusts chair)). Okay. ((looks at cameraman,  
                              laughs)) My cameraman!  
                              *Okay. ((E adjusts chair)). Okay. ((looks at cameraman,  
                              laughs)) My cameraman!*
- 3        M: Doozo.  
                              *Go ahead.*
- 4        B: Ano::.  
                              *Um::.*



- 5 M: (.) Hajimete.  
(.) *Start.*
- 6 B: Hai. Seito. Watash- ano:  
*Okay. Student. I- uh:*
- 7 M: Anata (wa seito desu)  
*You (are the student)*
- > 8 B: Atarashii kuruma o kashite itadakitai desu ga. ((laughs))  
*I would like you to lend me a new car. ((laughs))*

Notice that rather than avoiding using the new language being taught as she ~~did~~ during teacher-fronted practice, Becky chooses her own role in line 6, selecting the more difficult role of 'student' where production of the target utterance is required. And, the language which Becky succinctly avoided using by answering *nandemo ii* in the first excerpt, she produces here in line 8. The contrast between these two excerpts suggests that the one-on-one environment with another learner is quite different for Becky than the teacher-fronted environment where Becky must perform in front of others.<sup>13</sup>

While his participation was limited to the response turn in teacher-fronted practice, in pair work Mark uses Japanese to regulate the activity, asking Becky to sit down (line 1) and get started (lines 3 & 5) in Japanese. After Becky selects her own role for the role play (line 6), Mark confirms her role (line 7). In one-on-one interaction with Becky, Mark uses Japanese for a practical purpose in setting up the role play activity, without help from the teacher, blackboard, or fellow learner.

### Mark's Repair Initiation

In order to do the role play activity, Mark as 'teacher' has to understand what Becky says and respond appropriately. He has difficulty understanding the word *atarashii* [new] in Becky's line 8 utterance (shown above in 3a and repeated below in excerpt 3b), and checks his comprehension with a Next-Turn Repair Initiator (NTRI) (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977) in line 9 by saying *ashita* [tomorrow], which he has clearly confused with *atarashii*. Mark's NTRI has a profound impact on Becky's language. In line 10, Becky rephrases her utterance. In her rephrasing she does not do a mere repetition, but also corrects a lexical error, replacing *kashite* [lend] with *katte* [buy], and increases the syntactic complexity of her request by adding 'n'<sup>14</sup> after 'itadaku,' a revision that makes her request like the target requests modeled by the teacher. Mark shows his understanding in line 11.

- 3b) 8 B: Atarashii kuruma o kashite itadakitai desu ga. ((laughs))  
*I would like you to lend me a new car. ((laughs))*
- 9 M: Ashita?  
*Tomorrow? ((note, similarity of sound in the words 'atarashii' [new] and 'ashita' [tomorrow]))*
- > 10 B: Atarashii kuruma o: katte itadaki-itadakitai n desu ga,  
*I wou- would like you to buy me a new car.*
- 11 M: Aa! Atara- atarashi-  
*Oh! N- new-*

While neither Becky's lexical error (using *kashite* instead of *katte*) nor her use of a simplified structure (with 'n' deleted) were the trouble-sources for Mark, in her repetition she changes both. Mark's NTRI results in a refined restatement by Becky that is both grammatically more complex and corrects a lexical error, both without any assistance from the teacher who is standing by. Becky actively experiments with the language and corrects herself. In addition, her re-statement results in Mark's comprehension of the word *atarashii*, as he indicates in line 11.

### Expert-Novice Roles in Excerpts 3a-c

While Becky is in the 'expert' role in her interaction with Mark, having chosen her own role and taken the lead in this interaction after Mark prompts her to begin 3a, so far, she is simultaneously still in the role of 'novice' under the watchful eye of the teacher-expert who is standing by and listening to their pair work. In excerpt 3c, after Becky self-corrects her lexical error, in line 12 she checks with the teacher to see if what she thought was an error was really wrong. And, discovering that her correction was accurate, Becky repeats the verb phrase in line 14. Mark confirms his understanding of *atarashii* with another NTRI in line 15, and in response Becky repeats her entire request once again with ease and fluency.

- 3c) --> 12 B: Kashite? Kashite de ii?  
*Lend? Is 'lend' okay? ((note phonetic similarity between 'kashite' [lend] and 'katte' [buy]))*
- 13 T: Katte.  
*Buy.*
- 14 B: Katte? Katte itadakitai n desu ga,  
*Buy? I'd like you to buy.*

- 15 M: Atara- atarashii?  
N- new?
- 16 B: Atarashii ku//uma o katta itadakitai n desu ga,  
*I'd like you to buy me a new car.*

Finally, Mark shows comprehension and responds to Becky's request in line 17.

- 3d) 17 M: Aa soo desu ka. Aa, sore wa chotto.  
*Oh, is that right. Well, that's a little . . . ((note: this answer is an indirect refusal))*

Excerpts 3(a-d) reveal a shifting of expert-novice roles between learners and teacher. Mark takes the lead in the interaction initially by prompting Becky to get started. Becky then chooses her own role, the more difficult role of 'student,' and acts as expert, repeating her utterance for Mark, the novice who is having difficulty understanding what she says. However, at the same time Becky acts as expert, she is also still a novice who consults the teacher to confirm her lexical choice.

### Collaborative Learning in Pair Work

The data reveal that both Becky and Mark are able to learn and progress through collaborative meaning-making activity in Japanese. Not only do we see Becky, the learner with stronger language skills, assisting Mark by repeating herself so he can understand her, but these data reveal that even though Mark's skills are weaker than Becky's, Becky learns through working with him. Collaborative pair work with Mark allows Becky to experiment with and refine her own language use and play with the target utterance until she is able to say it with fluency and ease. Both of these learners are learning within their zones of proximal development in this mutually beneficial interaction. Mark, in his difficulty in understanding Becky, produces NTRIs which result in Becky's use of more refined, fluent language. Mark's successful use of NTRIs also aids in his own understanding. Modifications in Becky's language as a result of Mark's NTRIs, however, result in increased linguistic complexity, not simplicity. The lexical adjustment made is also not one in the direction of simplicity, but is a self-correction by Becky, and completely changes the meaning of the utterance. The results of negotiation (Pica, 1987; Chaudron, 1983), therefore, are not as clear-cut as previous research implies, but it is clear that Mark's NTRIs have an important function both in engaging him in the activity and allowing Becky the opportunity to correct herself and restate her utterance.

## Peer Scaffolding

While the notion of scaffolding is generally used when considering dyadic interaction between a novice and a teacher or native speaker, peer interaction between Becky and Mark results in a higher level of performance than may have been attained by either learner working alone. One way that this occurs is through prompting and correcting of each other. In Mark and Becky's second pass through the activity, Becky takes an active role in supporting Mark's language production.

- 4)            1        B: Doozo  
                      *Go ahead.*
- 2        M: Um. Um:::. Mmm:: Ah! (.) ((laughs))
- 3        B: Hai do:::zooo:! Hayaku!  
                      *Okay, go ahead ple::ase! Hurry!*
- 4        M: Seko. Seko no. Seko no:: Seko no tokei ga:: (.) a::h  
                      um.  
                      *Seiko. A seiko. A seiko:: a seiko watch:: (.) a::h um.*
- 5        B: Ka::
- 6        M: Katte? itadakitai n desu ga?  
                      *Buy? I'd like you to buy?*
- 7        B: Ha soo. Ii desu yo::.  
                      *Oh. Sure, that's fine::.*

Here, Mark takes the role of 'student,' prompted by Becky's 'doozo' in line 1. When he hesitates (line 2), Becky prompts him to hurry up in line 3. Mark haltingly begins in line 4, managing to get out the object of the sentence, a seiko watch, with false starts and repetitions. Becky helps Mark by giving him the first syllable of the verb in line 5, 'ka'—she stretches out the vowel, prompting Mark to continue. This help functions as scaffolding, assistance he needs to participate in the activity. In line 6, Mark produces the second half of the utterance. Becky shows acceptance of his utterance by accepting his request. Another example of one learner providing scaffolding to another occurs in Excerpt 1, repeated in part below, where Hal not only prods Mark with his own ideas of possible presents (lines 4 & 8), but also prompts him to make a request by providing the object and object marker (line 12) Mark needs to get the request started.



- 1) 1 T: John-san, Mark-san, nani ka arimasu ka?  
John, Mark, do you have anything ((you'd like to have))?
- 2 M: Arimasu ka, arimasu ka? Chotto (.) ((scratching head))  
Is there anything, is there anything? I'm not sure (.)
- 3 T: Nani ka kangaete kudasai.  
Please think of something.
- > 4 H: ((to Mark)) Okane ga ii desu yo.  
Money would be good.
- 5 T: Un.  
Uh huh
- 6 M: iie iie iie iie iie.  
No no no no no
- 7 T: Nan demo ii desu yo.  
Anything is okay.
- > 8 H: Tokei? Tokei?  
A watch? A watch?
- 9 T: Tokei?  
A watch?
- 10 M: Chocolate.
- 11 T: Chokoreeto?  
Chocolate?
- > 12 H: Chokoreeto. Chokoreeto o  
Chocolate. Chocolate ((topic marker))
- 13 M: Chokoreeto o ssss um o (.) okuri?// okuri?// okutte?//  
Chocolate ssss um (.) send? send? send?

These data show how interaction with a more competent peer can help the learner to develop within the ZPD, the space where the novice is able to do something with assistance that s/he would have otherwise been unable to do alone. Becky & Hal's prompting provide Mark with help he needs to produce all parts of the target utterance.

## Peer Correction

In the ZPD, learners gain socially situated language competence through collaborative joining of each others' strengths. The data show how this collaboration draws upon the matured skills of each learner, regardless of each learner's level of overall language development. In other words, any peer with mature skills to contribute becomes an expert. Even a peer who is weaker overall is expert when his or her strengths are contributed to help another learner. Analysis of the data reveal that not only is Becky (who is more skilled in the L2 overall) able to provide scaffolding for Mark, but (as will be shown below) Mark also aids Becky through explicit correction.

The following data are from the same pair work, but here we see Mark and Becky between passes at the role play activity. After completion of a pass through the role play, Becky begins to talk in Japanese about other things. In the next excerpt (5a), she starts talking about what Mark is wearing. She uses the wrong verb. In an NTRI in line 4, Mark repeats the verb (with rising intonation) that Becky chose. Becky repeats her utterance, pointing to Mark's vest, and repeats the incorrect verb in line 5. Mark then provides her with the correct verb in line 6, and she self-corrects in line 7.

- 5a)        1        B: Mark-san wa ano: besuto o (.)  
                               *Mark-san TP<sup>15</sup> um: vest AC (.)*
- 2                gee how do you say you're wearing a-<sup>16</sup>
- 3                kitte! kitte imasu.  
                               *cut-! cutting.*
- 4        M: Me? Kitte?  
                               *Me? Cut?*
- 5        B: ((pointing to Mark's vest)) Besuto o kitte kitte kitte  
                               *imasu.*  
                               ((pointing to Mark's vest)) *You are cutting a vest.*
- >        6        M: ((fingering own vest)) Kiteimasu?  
                               ((pointing to Mark's vest)) *Wearing?*
- 7        B: Kiteimasu. Kiteimasu. (.)  
                               *Wearing. Wearing. (.)*

Mark recognizes Becky's pronunciation error and provides her with the correct pronunciation in line 6, drawing upon his knowledge to help her. Through this interaction it is especially clear that novice and expert are fluid conceptions that

vary with the differing expertise of the participants as each peer contributes his or her own strengths to the collaborative construction of the interaction (See also Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991).

Becky also provides Mark with explicit error correction. Although he was able to pronounce the verb *itadakitai* correctly both in teacher-fronted practice prior to pair work (where he referred to the blackboard in excerpt 1) and in his first attempt to do so during pair work (excerpt 4), the third time he plays the role of 'student' he has difficulty. In Excerpt 6, he incorrectly conjugates *itadakitai* in line 3, along with mispronouncing the Japanese word for 'ice skating' in line 1 (the errors are underlined). Becky asks Mark to repeat (line 4), a request that results in Mark's line 9 repetition of the grammatical error but in self-correction of his pronunciation of 'ice skating.' Mark also changes the verb he was using, from *naosu* [to repair] to *oshieru* [to teach]. It is not clear whether this is a correction (note that *naosu* and *oshieru* share certain phonetic features and that the noun *aisu sukeeto* refers to the activity of skating as well as to the ice skates themselves) or a change. In line 10 Becky then provides Mark with explicit correction of the grammatical error, and Mark corrects himself in line 11.

- 6)            1        M: Aisu Sukating?  
                              *Ice Skating?*
- 2        B: Ice. Oh hai?  
                              *Ice. Oh uh-huh?*
- >        3        M: Hai. (.) naoshite? (.) itadai n desu ga.  
                              *Yes. (.) repair? (.) would you repair?*
- >        4        B: Moichido kudasai.  
                              *Again please?*
- 5        M: Moichido kudasai?  
                              *Again please?*
- 6        B: Watashi ((Cups hand behind ear)) (.) ano: (.) (yoku  
                              *wakarimasen).*  
                              *I don't understand well*
- >        7        M: Aisu skating. Aisu suke- Aisu sukeeto//=<sup>17</sup>  
                              *Ice skating. Ice ska- Ice skate*//=
- 8        B: //aisu sukeeto  
                              *//aisu sukeeto*

- 9 M: =aisu sukeeto ga (.) um (.) um (.) oshiete? itada- itadai n desu.//  
 =/ce-skating (.) uh (.) uh (.) I would like to receive your teaching?
- > 10 B: //itadakitai n desu.  
 //I would like to receive.
- > 11 M: A^ itadakitai n desu ga?  
 Oh. I would like to receive?
- 12 B: Hai. So. Ii desu yo. Wakarimashita.  
 Yes. Right. Sure. I understand.

Similar to the function of Mark's earlier NTRI, Becky's request for repetition results in Mark's self-correction of a lexical error, as well as a change in lexical choice. Becky then explicitly corrects the remaining grammatical error, after which Mark repeats the correct pronunciation of the misconjugated word. Note also that we see Becky here repeating after Mark in line 8 (where she repeats Mark's line 7 use of *aisu sukeeto*), prior to her correction. Repetition is a form of language play posited to serve an important function in L2 acquisition, with learners repeating what is within their ability to acquire (Lantolf, 1995).

### Peer Task Regulation: Defining the Task

In pair work, the teacher cannot regulate the progress of all pairs simultaneously, but generally monitors the learners as they engage in their activities. Different learners may define tasks differently, and use language for their own purposes within those tasks. For Becky, the assigned role play task is easy. In Excerpt 5b, below (a continuation of 5a, with line-numbering continuing to show consecutive development), Becky begins doing her own task, the task she began in 5a, that is different from the task assigned by the teacher.<sup>18</sup> Through this interaction, we see that for Becky, pair work becomes an opportunity for other forms of talking in Japanese. She uses Japanese to talk about the here and now—what Mark is wearing (excerpt 5a) and the camera operator (excerpt 5b, below). In both of these excerpts Becky is doing something different than what has been explicitly assigned, playing with the language in her talk about the classroom environment around her, and serving as her own conversation partner (see line 8), something perhaps more interesting (and clearly more challenging) to Becky than the assigned task at hand. She does this between passes of the assigned role play. This active use of Japanese for experimentation is important for Becky's acquisition of the L2, as well as for Mark, who through interaction with Becky has the opportunity to converse in Japanese for a natural, interactive purpose.



- 5b)<sup>19</sup> 8 B: Ano: ((looks at the camera operator)) Kanda-san wa tsukaa(.)te to omoimasu. Soo desu ne? Hai.  
*Um Mr. Kanda is tiring I think. He is, isn't he? Yes.*
- 9 M: Hai?  
*Yes?*
- 10 B: Tsuka- (.) tsukarete.<sup>20</sup>  
*Tir- (.) tiring.*
- 11 M: Tsukarete.  
*Tiring*
- 12 B: Tsukarete to (.) tsukarete to omoimasu.  
*I think he's (.) tiring.*
- 13 M: ((looks at Mr. Kanda. Nods))
- 14 E: ((laughing)) Ano ((laughing)) tsumaranai (.) tsumaranakute// (.) to omoimasu. ((laughing))  
 ((laughing)) uh ((laughing)) He's bored (.) boring//, I think.
- 15 M: ((laughs))

In this excerpt we again see Becky refining her language use in response to an NTRI (by Mark) after which she corrects *tsukaate* (line 8) to *tsukarete* (line 10). Though Mark shows engagement in the conversation Becky initiates (through his NTRI, nodding, and eye contact), he takes on the role of managing the pair work activity and gets Becky back onto the task assigned by the teacher in excerpt 5c. He does this in Japanese. This is the second time he uses Japanese to get Becky to do the assigned task, having done this earlier at the beginning of pair work (excerpt 3a). Notice how Mark's question and showing of his notes in line 16 results in Becky's return to the assigned task in line 18:

- 5c) --> 16 M: Chotto matte kudasai. ((picks up notebook. Scratches head. Looks at page.)) Ano: ima: (.) nani o shiteimasu ka? Ima? ((shows notebook to Becky)).  
*One moment please. Uh, now what (.) are you/we doing? Now?*
- 17 B: Mm?? ((lowers voice)) Nani o shiteimasu. Nani-Mm?? ((lowers voice)) What am I doing. What-

- > 18 ((raises voice)) doozo! ((points to blackboard)) Ano (.)  
 watashi wa sensei desu.  
 ((raises voice)) go ahead! ((points to blackboard)) Uh (.)  
*I'll be the teacher.*
- 19 M: Anata [wa sensei desu?  
 You *[are the teacher?*
- 20 B: [Anata wa seito.  
*[You are the student.*
- 21 M: Anata wa sensei?  
*You are the teacher?*
- 22 B: Hai. Watashi wa sensei// desu.  
*Yes. I am the teacher.*
- 23 M: Sensei?  
*Teacher?*
- 24 B: Doozo.  
*Go ahead.*

Mark gets Becky back onto the assigned task by asking her in line 16 what she (they) are doing. His question takes her by surprise, and she pauses to consider what he means, lowering her voice and repeating his question back to herself as private speech—speech that is communicative in appearance but psychological in function (DiCamilla & Lantolf, 1994). The purpose of private speech is to organize or direct the speaker's own mental activity—private speech has been found to emerge in adults when they confront difficult or novel circumstances (John-Steiner, 1992). Becky's difficulty in understanding Mark's simple question is further evidence that the two of them have defined their task differently (Duff & Coughlan, 1994)—Becky defines pair work not only as doing activities assigned by the teacher (in this case, the role play activity), but also as conversing in Japanese and playing with the language. Mark, however, sees Becky's conversation as off-task because *his* defined task is to do role plays. Mark uses Japanese successfully to regulate their work, appropriately getting Becky to do the assigned task.

The data reveal that Mark and Becky do their pair work *in Japanese* with minimal use of English, even using Japanese for conversation and task management—this is true not only for excerpts shown here, but for the entire pair work activity transcribed, from beginning to end. Brooks & Donato (1995) have noted that when learners of elementary L2 proficiency are exposed to

unfamiliar tasks, they often rely on the L1 to create common ground and develop strategies to perform the new task (see also Hall, this volume). However, as learners gain experience doing the similar sort of task, L1 use decreases dramatically. Becky and Mark's ability to manage the pair tasks, role assignments, prompting, repair and conversational bantering in Japanese without using English is evidence of experience with learner-learner collaborative tasks, as well as their increasing competence in the L2. The only use of English we see between Mark and Becky occurs when Becky tries to come up with a lexical item in line 2 of excerpt 5a.

### Performance After Pair Work

After pair work, the teacher returns the class to the teacher-fronted context for pairs to perform for the class. Mark and Becky are first asked to perform, with Mark acting as 'teacher' and Becky as 'student.' Although he conjugated *itadaku* correctly prior to the pair activity, and then both correctly and incorrectly during the role play activity (first correctly, then incorrectly, and then correctly again after correction from Becky) Mark makes the same and other errors when performing in front of the class (errors underlined):

- 7) --> 1 M: Hai. Becky-sensei. (.) Um (.) aisu sukeeto um:: Um.  
Aisu-sukeeto ga (.) oshiete itadain desu ka?  
*Yes, Becky. Um, ice-skating, um:: Um. will you teach me ice-skating?*
- 2 B: Hai. ii desu yo. Wakarimashita.  
*Yes. That's fine. I understand.*
- 3 M: Hai doomo arigatoo gozaimashita.  
*Thank you very much.*
- 4 B: Hai doo itashimashite.  
*You're welcome.*
- > 5 T: Sukeeto o oshiete itadaikitai. Aisu sukeeto o::,  
*Would you teach me. Ice-skating::,*
- 6 M: Aisu sukeeto o,  
*Ice skating::,*
- 7 T: Oshiete itadakitai n desu ga  
*Would you teach me.*

In line 5, the teacher explicitly corrects the errors, prompting Mark to repeat after her by providing the object '*aisu sukeeto*' and its grammatical marker '*o*' in line 5, the first words of the target request '*aisu sukeeto o oshiete itadakitai n desu ga.*'. Mark repeats after the teacher in line 6, and the teacher provides the rest of the sentence in line 7, which Mark does not repeat.

Comparison of excerpt 7 with excerpt 6 shows Mark and Becky's performance for the class to be strikingly different than their interaction during pair work. In excerpt 6 pair work Mark uses rising intonation (line 1) to invite Becky's participation as he works to construct the target request, in his excerpt 7 performance Mark immediately produces the request targeted. This may be a result of previous rehearsal. However, Mark makes the same conjugation error in both excerpts, and differences between pair work and performance can be seen in the different way these errors are handled in the two contexts. In excerpt 6 pair activity, after Mark's conjugation error Becky asks him to repeat (line 4), and then explicitly corrects him (line 10) when he makes the same error again (line 9). In excerpt 7 performance, however, Becky ignores Mark's error. There are other differences between the two excerpts as well, including repetition by both Becky (line 8) and Mark (line 5) in excerpt 6, with no repetition evident the excerpt 7 performance. Overall, excerpt 6 and the other pair work excerpts show a high level of interaction and include repetition, repair, and language play that do not occur in performance where both Becky and Mark stick to their defined role play turns. The excerpt 7 performance also includes a thanking routine that is absent from their previous role plays. Mark's errors in conjugation of *itadaku* and in particle selection (he uses *ga* rather than *o* both here and in excerpt 6) are handled by the teacher through her prompts for him to repeat after her.

## The Role of Pair Work in Classroom L2 Acquisition

In Vygotskian psycholinguistics, social interaction and cognitive/linguistic development are in a dynamic relationship. Analysis of Becky and Mark's interaction reveals that the guided social interaction occurring in collaborative learner-learner interaction allows these learners to creatively use Japanese for a variety of purposes and allows more flexibility in language use than is evidenced when learners are on display in front of their classmates whether in performance or when answering questions posed by the teacher. From a developmental perspective, pair work clearly provides an environment which allows learners to participate freely in using Japanese for their own purposes as they take part in meaning-making activity which increases the salience of the language used.

Free from teacher allocation of turns and from the formality of performance in front of classmates, Becky and Mark are able to use Japanese for a variety of authentic purposes in collaborative interaction. The present data show that while working on the target structure, the pair work context allows Mark and Becky the flexibility 1) to work on the assigned role-play activity; 2) to express humor; 3) to actively test hypotheses through language play; 4) to converse in Japanese



about the here-and-now; 5) to experiment with lexical choice; 6) to use Japanese for conversational management including modulation of the pace of the interaction, repair, and role negotiation; 7) to use the L2 for regulatory functions (task management); and 8) to have a learning experience that allows each learner to work on their own tasks in the L2 while engaged in meaningful interaction. This use of Japanese for a wide variety of language functions does not occur in teacher-fronted practice which tends to restrict language use to the narrow confines of the role play, and learner participation to the response turn. Clearly pair work allows these learners to use Japanese for meaning-making activity both within and beyond the context of the assigned role play task.

Learners also develop in the ZPD through the opportunity to use both matured and maturing language—Mark is not yet able to correctly conjugate *itadaku*, but moves toward this through use of *itadaku* in interaction with Becky (and through participation as interlocutor when Becky uses it). Both work productively on the assigned task, and Becky in addition, having defined the task differently, works to express herself in Japanese and talk about what she sees happening around her in the classroom. In this language play we see Becky experimenting with the *te*-form of verbs and adjectives (Excerpt 5b), actively testing hypotheses in working to figure out how to fit this grammatical form into an appropriate context through her involvement in meaning-making activity. While her uses of the *te*-form are not target-like, this language play reveals how the pair work context allows active experimentation with the language through which the learner can question how language is used. That learners have the opportunity to experiment with the language in a comfortable environment is a necessary component of L2 acquisition, which, while common in naturalistic learning settings, may be restricted in L2 classrooms. As evidenced by Becky's experimentation with the lexical items *katte* [buy] and *kashite* [lend] in excerpts 3b and 3c, experimentation allows the learner to generate questions about language use, as seen when Becky checks with the teacher to see which word is appropriate for the given context.

The data reveal that Mark and Becky are using Japanese to develop increased L2 competence in the ZPD through their collaboration, and that they actively contribute their strengths to help one another. While both Becky and Mark make mistakes, we do not see evidence that they pick up one another's errors, but that working together helps them to reach a higher level of accuracy and communicative competence. Analysis reveals how in pair work learner expertise emerges in two ways which are absent or less evident in teacher-fronted work or learner performance in front of the class. First, peer interaction allows learners to share their strengths through scaffolding as learners explicitly help one another through prompting and error correction. In pair work, the roles of expert and novice are not fixed (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991). Rather, peer interaction allows these learners to act as both expert and novice, constructing their roles through the varying levels of expertise they contribute to the interaction. Secondly, peer interaction provides learners with the opportunity to apply their

developing competence to their own language use through self-correction and refinement of their own utterances. Both Becky and Mark help each other through explicit correction and repetition requests or NTRIs. Becky, in addition, provides Mark with assistance through prompting. Mark's clarification requests work not only to modulate the pace of interaction and increase his own opportunities to hear Japanese, but also provide Becky the opportunity to reflect upon her own language use as evidenced by Becky's refinement of her utterances. In the same way, Becky's requests for repetition allow Mark to refine and correct his own language. Each effectively serves as interlocutor and 'audience' for the other, a function whose importance cannot be denied when we realize that what we are working to prepare learners to do is to interact with others in the L2.

The analysis presented here, while providing data from only one learner pair, provides evidence that collaborative learner-learner interaction is a place where important L2 acquisition processes occur. There is nothing remarkable about Becky and Mark. They are two ordinary learners in an ordinary foreign language classroom. What this study reveals is how ordinary learners in a guided pair work interactive context move forward in their acquisition of the L2, sharing their strengths through the process of collaborative learning in the ZPD. More research is needed to better understand these processes. In addition, further analysis of classroom collaborative interaction in a variety of L2 classroom settings is needed to better understand how learner collaboration can be productively stimulated in L2 classrooms.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Students in their second year of Japanese language study at the university level enrolled in 'Intermediate Japanese.'

<sup>2</sup> While this "contradictory nature of language development" may seem to be circular to those accustomed to traditional Western scientific paradigms, the power of Vygotsky's theory lies in its elimination of discrete dualistic dichotomies. See Newman & Holzman (1993) for an extended discussion of the limitations of dualistic scientific paradigms.

<sup>3</sup> See Donato 1994 for a critique of this view.

<sup>4</sup> In Roberts (1995) the learner-learner task is a two-way communicative pair-work task conducted outside of the classroom since pair and group work were not a part of the curriculum of the program where he collected data.

<sup>5</sup> For Vygotsky, cognitive development and linguistic development are a unitary phenomenon.

<sup>6</sup> NS=Native Speaker NNS=Nonnative Speaker

<sup>7</sup> Recall that in the ZPD learner's (novice's) interaction with adults or more able peers (experts) enables them to do that which they could not do unaided.

<sup>8</sup> The Follow-up turn is defined by its sequential location and function as a second pair-part to the response turn and as the third turn of the 3-turn elicitation activity. Follow-up rather than Evaluation is used to describe this turn (IRF rather than IRE) since it may contain a wide variety of follow-up utterances, not only those which are evaluative (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, Ohta 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Lantolf's review of the literature shows that language play involves learner manipulation of linguistic patterns of the L2, for example, verb paradigms, revealing learner focus on linguistic form. It is interesting that previous studies of language play indicate that this focus on form by L1

and L2 learners is stimulated by meaningful interaction. See Lantolf (1995) and the references cited therein.

<sup>10</sup> Interviews in Japanese, observation of their class, and the experience of the researcher teaching Becky and Mark in previous courses show Becky to more proficient in Japanese than Mark.

<sup>11</sup> Mark does not repeat the same grammatical form 'send' three times, but changes the form from 'okuri' to 'okutte.' 'Okutte' is the correct form for this particular context.

<sup>12</sup> The object 'chocolate' is not ellipted, but is stated in line 13 followed by the accusative marker 'o.' English glosses do not accurately capture the Japanese Mark is using, which is constructed correctly: "*Chokoreeto o okutte itadakitai n desu ga*" means "I request that you send me some chocolate".

<sup>13</sup> As evidenced by the dramatic difference in Becky's participation, participating in an activity in front of the class (where she is acting as herself and is on display) and with a partner (where she is playing the role of a student and does not have a large audience) constitute completely different activities for Becky (Duff & Coughlan 1994).

<sup>14</sup> The addition of *n* transforms the utterance from a simple sentence to one containing an embedded clause.

<sup>15</sup> TP=topic marker (*wa*). AC=accusative (object) marker (*o*).

<sup>16</sup> Becky says this in English.

<sup>17</sup> The equal sign (=) is used to indicate that the speaker continues the turn without pause

<sup>18</sup> See Duff & Coughlan (1994) for an analysis of how seemingly identical tasks may in actuality be different activities for different participants.

<sup>19</sup> Rather than numbering this consecutively as excerpt 7, this excerpt has been numbered '5b' because the portion of interaction transcribed here is an uninterrupted continuation of Mark and Becky's interaction shown in excerpt 5a. In the same way, excerpt 5c follows immediately after 5b.

<sup>20</sup> *Tsukarete* (lines 8 (where it is pronounced incorrectly), 10, 11, 12) and *tsumaranakute* (line 14) are difficult to translate here. *Tsukarete* and *tsumaranakute* are the *te*-forms of *tsukareru* and *tsumaranai*, respectively. While these are correct *te*-forms, they are both used in error, as the *te*-form of a verb or adjective cannot be used with *to omoimasu*. However, Becky's utterances are comprehensible. Repeated use of the *te*-form is another example of Becky's language play. Repetition is not only a feature of discourse with interactional implications (Tannen 1989), but is a feature of language play (Lantolf 1995) that has an important cognitive function in both L1 and L2 acquisition (Johnstone 1987, Anton & DiCamilla 1995)

<sup>21</sup> Note that this excerpt contains repetition by both Becky and Mark.

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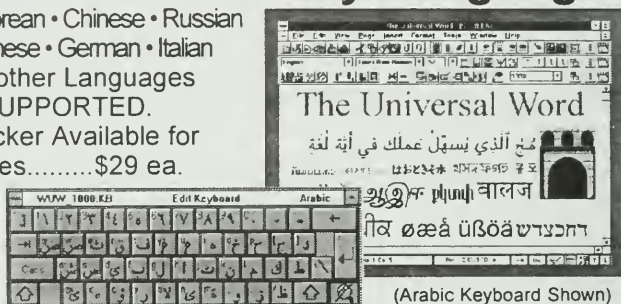
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# Conversations with Vovó: A Case Study of Child Second Language Acquisition and Loss

Peter J. Coughlan

*Nissan Design International*

*This paper examines a series of naturally-occurring phone calls between a young child and his grandmother in the child's second language. During these calls, the child's second language production first appears to increase in complexity, but is subsequently abandoned. It is argued that while the acquisition of the second language can be viewed as a product of expert-novice interaction, the subsequent abandonment of the second language can be understood only by examining its role in the larger socio-cultural activity in which the L2 is used.*

## INTRODUCTION

Larson-Freeman and Long (1991) distinguish among three major types of theories in second language acquisition research—so-called "nativist" theories, in which acquisition is attributed to "an innate biological endowment"; "environmentalist" theories, which attribute learning to experience; and "interactionist" theories, in which both environment and biology play a role in L2 acquisition (p. 226). In each of these three types of theories, acquisition resides within the individual, and linguistic knowledge is appropriated from, or triggered by, second language input. Causal links are made between various internal and/or external factors and an individual's linguistic performance.

One difficulty with such causal models is that they must invariably appeal to *internal mechanisms* (for instance, an "affective filter") or *processes* (e.g., "parameter setting") to which we have no direct access (since they are assumed to be situated in the head of the individual). Or, conversely, they must appeal to *externally accessible factors* (e.g., "social class") or *strategies* (e.g., "simplification") which are difficult or impossible to empirically link to the acquisition process, since we cannot possibly measure the effect of a contextual factor on actual linguistic production, or argue the effect of the use of a given strategy on an individual's acquisition of a particular form.

One way to overcome the problems inherent in causal models of this type is to consider acquisition to be an accomplishment of groups of people, rather than of single individuals. In other words, an individual's production in a second language is a collaboratively-achieved phenomenon. And, just as



language is not a property of the individual, it is not only the language that is being acquired; for the social use of language is itself shaped by (and constitutive of) larger culturally-defined activities, of which language plays only a partial (albeit critical) role. Thus, observable changes in the (linguistic) behavior of an individual are not attributable to the individual alone, but to changes in that individual's participation in an activity, or to changes in the activity itself over time.

In what follows, I will explore a young child's use of a second language (Portuguese) while engaged in a series of naturally-occurring telephone calls between him and his grandmother (Vovó). This interaction provides the only context in which—at the time of the study—the child can regularly be observed to speak Portuguese.<sup>1</sup> Over time, the child's participation in the phone calls appears to promote his acquisition of the second language. Following a temporary change in the social setting, however, the child ceases to use the second language in that context. After analyzing certain types of interactional sequences that appear to facilitate the child's acquisition of Portuguese, I will then suggest that his subsequent "loss" of the L2 can be explained as reflecting changes in the community's practice of a specific activity (the phone calls) in which the second language is regularly used.

## DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND DATA

The focal participant (David: 3;6) was born in Portugal, and moved to the United States at 5 months of age. His mother is Portuguese, and his father is American. At the time the calls were recorded, David's family predominantly used English in their daily interactions, with limited use of Portuguese in routines such as bed-time rituals, greetings and leave-takings, terms of endearment, certain household objects, etc. This pattern of English and Portuguese use in the home had been the case since shortly before his second birthday.

Outside of the home environment, David's exposure to Portuguese had been limited to contact with his Portuguese relatives. This contact included brief phone calls and letters from relatives in Portugal, a 6-week visit by his family to Portugal when he was 3 years old, and visits by his grandparents to the United States.

Beginning with his grandparents' first extended stay in the U.S., (when they took up residence in an apartment building located about a 20 minute drive from their grandchild's home), telephone contact between David and his grandparents became a regular occurrence. At this time, the telephone calls between David and his grandmother provided the only observed context in which David used Portuguese in a sustained and consistent manner.

Calls were regularly recorded for the period extending from December 1990 through March 1991, at which time the grandmother returned to Portugal for a one-month stay. Upon her return to the U.S., telephone calls between David and his grandmother were no longer conducted in Portuguese.

In all, 51 phone calls were transcribed using conversation analytic conventions.<sup>2</sup> The calls under investigation range from a few seconds to many minutes in length. For the majority of calls, David directly initiates and ends telephone conversations with his grandmother.<sup>3</sup> Other conversations come at the beginning, middle, or end of telephone calls between David's mother and his grandmother or grandfather. David's calls are initiated for a variety of reasons—for instance, to say good night, to report about the day's events (including play activity); to share news (either televised current events, or information received in letters or phone calls from others); to discuss issues (such as the Persian Gulf conflict, or the bad weather); to relay messages (from David's mother to his grandparents); or to request visits from his grandmother. Conversations between David and his grandmother are, in general, much longer and more involved when David initiates the call than when his grandmother does, since his grandmother usually calls David's house not to speak to him but to speak to his mother.

## ANALYSIS

I will first examine expert-novice interactional sequences within the phone calls between David and his grandmother which may have facilitated David's production of Portuguese. The dramatic change observed in David's L2 production during later phone calls is then explained through appeal to a larger perspective—one which considers the multiple conversational dyads which constitute the phone call activity for this particular social group.

### **Expert-Novice Interaction and L2 Acquisition**

The view that expert-novice interaction is the locus of cognitive development originates with Vygotsky (1978).<sup>4</sup> At the center of this view is the notion of a "zone of proximal development," in which more expert participants help novices to accomplish actions which the novices would be unable to accomplish alone. A look at the phone calls reveals many ways in which David's L2 production is indeed facilitated through interaction with more expert interlocutors (specifically, his grandmother and mother), enabling David to produce language that he would be unable to produce alone. During these calls, David gains exposure to new forms in the new language, and he gains practice in using forms with which he is already familiar. Observable changes in the use of these forms over time suggest linguistic development.

In Excerpt 1, for instance, David has called his grandmother to say good night. During the call, David produces a problematic utterance (pragmatically speaking) which is replaced by his grandmother's more contextually-appropriate one. Excerpt 1 provides an example of highly salient instance of expert intervention, in which David's inappropriate or agrammatical use of a form is "transformed" by his grandmother into a more appropriate or grammatical form.<sup>5</sup>

### Excerpt 1

DA = David, VO = Vovó (grandmother); Portuguese utterances followed by gloss in English

- 01 DA; então (0.5) até já.  
           "so, see you soon"  
 02 VO; então boa noite. vai para cama?  
           "so good night. are you going to bed?"  
 03 DA; boa noite  
           "good night"  
 04 VO; durma bem  
           "sleep well"

We cannot know from the interactional record alone how conscious David is of the inappropriateness of his utterance "então até já." Its inappropriateness might be brought to his awareness by his grandmother's non-matching response at line 02, since the conventional response to *até já* in Portuguese conversation is regularly *ate já* (as with the English *hello* or *goodbye*, where the response is lexically the same as the greeting). A second indication that his utterance may not be entirely appropriate lies in the parallel structure of the grandmother's subsequent utterance at line 02, *então boa noite*, which replaces only the problematic portion of David's utterance, *até já*. Further evidence that Vovó's utterance "corrects" David's is found in his response to that replacement utterance at line 03, which parallels only its first half, failing to provide a response to the question "vai para cama?" altogether. This parallelism suggests that David has attended to only the "corrective" portion of the utterance, his *boa noite* being either a response to Vovó's *boa noite*, or a redo of the utterance which began the sequence. The parallelisms which link their utterances together thus facilitate a step-wise transformation of David's first (problematic) utterance into a second, more appropriate one.

If interactional sequences similar to this are the vehicle through which linguistic development takes place, then it is necessary to show subsequent change in usage of the form in order to claim that acquisition has occurred. Transcripts of the phone calls reveal that David does not at first appear to develop in his understanding and use of *até já*—in fact, he inappropriately employs it four more times within the next 11 calls in the corpus, causing one

to wonder whether anything has been learned through either that verbal exchange or subsequent ones (which are similar to the first, with signalling, and correction, of the inappropriately-used form by his grandmother). Though these four infelicitous tokens of the form do not in themselves suggest linguistic development, however, there is evidence of change over time later in the corpus: after the 13th call in the corpus, David abandons the *até já* form, replacing it in the remaining calls by a more generic closing, *adeus*, (glossed in English as "goodbye"). This suggests that the focus on problematic language in the initial exchange, facilitated through interaction with his grandmother, does indeed lead to subsequent change in usage by David.

Excerpt 2 serves to illustrate how the grandmother's speech aids David's grammatical production as well. Here, David appears unable to produce the first-person past form of "saw" until his grandmother's subsequent utterance provides him with the linguistic resources to do so

### Excerpt 2

- 01 DA; eu saw o: o underground home?  
           *"I saw the: the underground home?"*
- 02 VO; pois.  
           *"Ah hah"*  
           (1.5)
- 03 VO; não vi não meu amor.  
           *"No I didn't see (it), no my dear"*
- 04 DA; eu vi na teeveesão  
           *"I saw on television"*
- 05 VO; a: viste, ah:::::  
           *"ah you saw it, ah:::::"*

In this passage, David's production of the English word "saw" within the Portuguese text (at line 01) suggests that he does not know (or at least does not recall at the moment of speaking) the equivalent Portuguese form. However, his grandmother's production of the form (in Portuguese) in her own utterance at line 03 provides him with access to the form, even though it appears to have been produced in order to complete her own utterance, rather than to correct David's previous utterance.

Excerpt 3 (taken from one minute later in the same phone call) provides another example of how David borrows verbal forms from his grandmother's speech:



*Excerpt 3*

- 01 VO; o avô João é que costuma ver assim essa televisão toda.  
*"grandfather João is used to seeing all that television."*
- 02 .hh a vovó não viu.  
*.hh grandmother didn't see."*
- 03 DA; eu- eu \*viu.  
*"I- I \*saw"*
- 04 VO; foste tu e o avô.  
*"(it was) you and grandfather"*

In this example, the third-person form produced by grandmother in line 02 is ungrammatical within the context of David's own utterance at 03.<sup>6</sup> (The correct form would have been "vi," as in line 04 of Excerpt 2.) As with Excerpt 1, we cannot make a claim (based on the limited amount of data) that the grandmother's intervention has helped David to learn a new form; his exposure to that new form, however, has been a catalyst in his production of it.

While the above excerpts illustrate the ways in which David and his grandmother collaboratively communicate, help by David's mother can also be said to facilitate David's participation in the phone calls. She does so in at least three ways: by dialing the phone when David expresses a desire to make a call to his grandmother; by contributing linguistic resources from which he can build utterances intended for his grandmother; and, less directly, by supplying the grandmother with knowledge of the day's newsworthy events before David has spoken with her, such that Vovó can anticipate the content of his conversations even before he speaks.

In Excerpt 4, for example, Vovó is preparing to visit David's house, and David (prompted by his mother) is calling to advise her to dress warmly because it is windy outside. His mother, who is standing next to him during the call, contributes linguistic resources (at line 06) from which David can build an utterance intended for his grandmother.

*Excerpt 4*

TE = David's mother

((TE dials phone, then passes it to DA. It rings twice before VO answers))

- 01 VO; si:,  
*"yes"*
- 02 DA; .(XXX) então precisa da uma jacket.  
*"so, you need a jacket"*
- 03 VO; a: achas que sim,  
*"ah, you think so?"*

- 04 DA; si  
"yes"  
05 VO; 'tá bem pronto  
"very well, okay"  
=  
06 TE; °está a ficar vento° ((directed to David))  
"it's getting windy"  
07 VO; 'to obrigada.  
"thanks very much"  
08 DA; STá ficar vento.  
"it's getting windy"  
09 VO; a: 'stá bem. pronto.<sup>7</sup>  
"ah, very well, okay"  
10 DA; então adeus  
"so, goodbye"  
11 VO; adeus obrigada.  
"goodbye, thank you"

This passage illustrates 3 ways in which David's mother facilitates his interaction with grandmother—first, by dialing the phone; second, by providing the opportunity to relay an important message; and third, by contributing the language he needs to relay this message.

Similarly, in Excerpt 5, it is information obtained through a previous conversation with David's mother that helps the grandmother to introduce the topic of the conversation.

### Excerpt 5

- 01 DA; hi ((spoken between rings, before phone is picked up))  
02 VO; sim?  
"yes?"  
03 DA; .ola  
"hi"  
04 VO; ola meu queri: [do  
"hi my dear"  
05 DA; [tão  
"so"  
06 VO; então foi a praia,  
"so you went to the beach"  
07 DA; .uh sim. eu foi a praia tem (0.5) eu brincou.  
"uh yes, I went to the beach .hh have (0.5) I played"

While David initiates this call (with the help of his mother, who dials for him), it is the grandmother who introduces the newsworthy topic of

conversation. At line 05 he produces a single word, the discourse particle *então* (which, when produced alone, conventionally elicits news from its recipient). This particle is conventionally employed to elicit speech from its intended recipient, much as the English "well?" spoken with rising intonation.). Its interactional effect is to place the burden of introducing the topic of the phone call on his grandmother. Her knowledge of his trip to the beach (gotten from an earlier conversation with David's mother) provides the means with which to do so.

Because his mother, like his grandmother, helps him to achieve interactionally what he would not be able to achieve alone, she must also be considered responsible for his heightened participation in (and therefore, his acquisition of) the second language activity.

Just as David's mother supports his participation in the phone calls, so too does the presence of another language, English. A closer look at the data reveals the bilingual nature of their interaction, in which English appears sporadically within the predominantly Portuguese text of the early phone calls. One instance of this occasional use has already been presented in Excerpt 2, where David inserts the English "saw" and "underground home," presumably because he does not know how to express these terms in Portuguese. The grandmother's response to David in that passage indicates that she has understood his use of English "saw," (since she produces "saw" in her subsequent response utterance) though it is unclear whether or not she has understood David's "underground home" (which is not reproduced, or directly referred to, in either English or Portuguese).

Excerpt 6 provides a further example in which David and his grandmother employ English to help them communicate. This time, it is the grandmother who employs English to help clarify a problematic vocabulary item for David.

### *Excerpt 6*

- 01 VO; olha a vovó (.) estava a acabar ali um (0.5) uns **tricots**,  
           *"listen, grandma was finishing some knitting"*  
 02 DA; que que sticos  
           *"what is "tricots"?"*  
 03 VO; **tricots, knit**  
 04 DA; **knit?**  
 05 VO; **knit.** que é para começar a tua camisola  
           *"knit. to start your sweater"*  
 06 DA; a minha,  
           *"mine,"*  
 07 VO; pois, a seguir, vais tu.  
           *"right, yours will be next"*

Although the elicitation for clarification of "tricots" is made in Portuguese (line 02), David's grandmother responds to that elicitation in English (at line 03). Perhaps owing to the inappropriate form of the grandmother's response (she responds "knit" rather than the grammatically appropriate "knitting"), David's second request for clarification at line 04 receives a response in both English and Portuguese at line 05. Over the course of several utterances, the coordinated use of Portuguese and English serves to isolate the problematic item and bring it into focus for the interlocutors. Judging from David's utterance at line 06 ("mine," which can be construed to mean "my sweater"), it appears that over the course of this interaction, David has come to understand this problematic term.

As with previous excerpts, we cannot be sure of the precise effect of this particular interactional sequence on David's acquisition, since our only "proof" would be re-use of the form in a new interactional context.<sup>8</sup> Even in the case of such use, however, it would be difficult to separate the novice's production of the form from the social, physical, or linguistic context in which it is used.

## FROM ACQUISITION TO LOSS

Interaction such as that presented in Excerpts 1-6 occurs regularly for a period of three months, during which time David (with the help of his mother, his grandmother, and English) displays growth in his use of Portuguese. This is reflected in lengthened conversations in Portuguese, and less frequent use of English during those conversations. After the grandmother's return from a one-month stay in Portugal, however (during which time their conversations stop), David and his grandmother all but abandon the use of Portuguese in their phone conversations. With the exception of greetings and leave-takings, the calls are conducted entirely in English. The extent of that change from Portuguese to English is shown in Excerpt 7.

### Excerpt 7

- 01 VO; hello  
 02 DA; hi vovó  
       "hi grandma"  
 03 VO; ah meu querido como está  
       "ah my dear how are you"  
 04 DA; 'sta bom .hh  
       "well"  
 05 VO; ( )  
 06 DA; um you know the potions that you gave me?  
 07 VO; yes?  
 08 DA; well, I- I- um guessed everything that was inside them.



.hh I knew what was inside them.

09 VO; did you?

10 DA; yeah. I just guessed

(1.0)

11 VO; what was it?

While Excerpts 1-6 help to demonstrate the process of acquisition from a collaborative perspective, Excerpt 7 requires us to account not *for how a language is acquired*, but for *why it appears to be lost*. To do this from the perspective of expert-novice dyadic interaction, we would have to offer explanations which appeal to participants' use of, or failure to use, certain strategies; or to the unseen and unarticulated (i.e., psychological) motives which underlie the interaction. For instance, it might be argued that David's cessation of Portuguese results from the limited meaning that they can collaboratively achieve in the second language. Or we might argue that during the grandmother's one-month visit to Portugal, David develops some kind of affective block to speaking in Portuguese. An equally plausible explanation can be found by considering the larger socio-cultural discourse community of which David, and Portuguese, is a part. Rather than attribute change solely to the individual (in this case, David), perhaps we can attribute change to the larger discourse community of which David is a member—in other words, to changes in the socio-cultural context in which the second language is used.

### Activities and Change in L2 Use

In order to understand the socio-cultural context in which the interaction between David and his grandmother arises, it is necessary to consider David's interaction not only with his grandmother, but also with other family members who engage in phone conversations with him. Perhaps the most important of these is David's grandfather. Conversations between David and his grandfather are almost as frequent as those with grandmother—David often speaks to one grandparent directly after speaking with the other. The content of their calls is frequently parallel. Excerpt 8, for example, provides an example of a discussion between David and his grandmother of the day's weather. This conversation is then contrasted with one between David and his grandfather on the same topic (in Excerpt 9).

#### Excerpt 8

01 VO; hoje o tempo 'sta mal não é verdade,

*"today the weather's bad, isn't it?"*

02 DA; sim 'sta (.) a chover e tem uma storm e s- coisa

*"yes, it's raining and there's a storm and s- thing*

03 VO; ah tem?

- 04 DA; *"ah, you have [one]?"*  
 sim  
*"yes"*
- 05 VO; o que é que tem querido  
*"what do you have/what's wrong?"*
- 06 DA; uh- uh vento:: .hhh agua  
*"wind::, water"*
- 07 VO; a: po//is:  
 ah, right
- 08 DA; coisas as-  
*"things like-"*
- 09 VO; é muito // aborecido não é quer//ido  
*"it's very tiring, isn't it, sweetheart?"*
- 10 DA; a: si  
*"a: yes"*
- 11 DA; sim.  
*"yes."*
- 12 VO; a v- a vóvó também não gosta  
*"grandmother doesn't like it either"*
- (1.0)

After a brief discussion on another topic, David asks to speak to his grandfather. The opening of their extended conversation (which lasts more than 15 minutes) is presented in Excerpt 9.

### Excerpt 9

AV = grandfather

- 01 VO; então vou passar ao av<sup>o</sup>.  
*"so, I'll pass [the phone] to grandfather."*
- (2.0)
- 02 AV; hi
- 03 DA; hi
- 04 AV; how are you
- 05 DA; (there's) .hh there's a problem here .hh ah um around our land.
- (1.0)
- 06 DA; .hh it's a big storm and rai- lots of rain and wind is coming.
- 07 AV; well that is not a pro:blem my dear neto.  
*grandson*
- 08 DA; why?
- 09 AV; because, you know. The rain is a necessary thing. We need rain
- 10 DA; why
- 11 AV; because without raining we haven't got water.

(1.0)

12 AV; and without water (.) we cannot have food we cannot have plants  
 we cannot (have) lettuce .hh um (1.0) carrots, etcetera,  
 potatoes, many things .hh and um ((clears throat)) .hh on the  
 other hand, um, when you see raining, you can see that rain uhm  
 (3.0) cleans (0.5) uh

(1.0)

13 DA; pollution

14 AV; cleans pollution cleans the air. And all the germs all that  
 stuff

This excerpt nicely illustrates how David can be more independent, and at the same time can convey more information, when he speaks in English. From a second language acquisition perspective, however, the call is uninteresting—after all, if our aim is to understand L2 acquisition, then we should examine instances of L2 interaction.<sup>9</sup>

Assuming such a perspective, however, blinds us to the fact that the phone call activity consists not only of conversations between David and his grandmother (in Portuguese), but between David and his grandfather (in English) as well. In the early months of the activity, phone calls occur in both English and Portuguese. With the grandmother's departure for Portugal, however, the activity is re-defined as one occurring only in English. During the grandmother's absence, the support mechanisms built up to facilitate David's participation in the calls are no longer needed. This has a dramatic impact on the nature of the activity—David no longer requires his parents' support to participate in the activity because that activity is now conducted in English. His frequent calls to his grandfather, unassisted by his parents, reflect how he likes this independence.

When the grandmother returns from Portugal, she must adapt to the new social (linguistic) norms of the activity that have been established in her absence. From the perspective of the individual language learner, operating within the context of the grandmother-grandchild dyad, this change appears to signal a loss of the second language. From the perspective of the wider activity (phone calls conducted by this larger social group consisting of David, his parents, and grandparents), the cessation of Portuguese may instead reflect the evolution of the activity—from one in which David's participation is heavily supported (through assistance with dialing and the supply of needed vocabulary), to one in which he becomes an independent, and more equal, participant. The "loss" of Portuguese is beneficial for David—it allows him to participate more fully in conversations with his grandparents. His grandmother benefits as well—with language less of a barrier between them, they can now get down to other substantive issues upon which their relationship is built.

## CONCLUSION

David's fate is the fate of many potentially bilingual children (or, for that matter, adults), whose second language use ceases, or fossilizes, before it has been fully developed. While David's case is obviously unique (due to the fact that his observed second language production is limited to a single activity) it nonetheless serves to illustrate that analysts may stand to profit by examining L2 interactions in the context of other socio-culturally relevant activities in which the second language is embedded. What we typically call "second language activities" may instead be merely second language interactions occurring within some larger bi- or multi-lingual settings or activities. Changes in learners' production over time (which we frequently label acquisition or loss) may well reflect changes in those activities or settings themselves, changes which we may not be able to notice if our focus is limited to L2 interaction alone. Only when we view language acquisition or loss (as reflected in a speaker's use of the language) as a by-product of participation in a given social group's range of activities, will we begin to understand why some people successfully acquire and use second languages, and others don't.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In all other interaction involving the same participants, the child speaks English.

<sup>2</sup> Transcripts use a simplified version of conversation analytic conventions Atkinson and Heritage (1984). Notations used in these excerpts are as follows:

Notation	Meaning
(0.5)	Intervals between or within utterances, 10th of seconds
?	rising intonation
,	slightly rising intonation
.	falling intonation
:	sound stretch
[	onset of overlap
=	simultaneous utterances
.hh	audible inbreath
(( ))	researcher comments/clarification
(XXX)	unclear utterance
CAPS	indicate raised volume
°xxx°	indicate lowered volume



<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the 3-month period in which data were collected, calls initiated by David were dialed by his mother or father. In February 1991, an auto-dial phone was installed in David's home, allowing him to call his grandparents without parental assistance. This changes both the frequency and the nature of his calls—he calls more often, and sometimes without his parents' awareness that a call is being, or has been, made.

<sup>4</sup> More recent incamations of this viewpoint include, for example, Rogoff (1990) or Lave and Wenger (1991).

<sup>5</sup> Similar sequences have been previously discussed in the SLA literature. Excerpts 1 through 3 appear to be a blend of what Hatch (1978) calls "vertical constructions" and Werner-Gough (1975) refers to as "incorporation strategy" (both cited in Ellis, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Grandmother's practice referring to herself in the third person is reminiscent of Anglo-American "caregiver speech" (as in the expression, produced by a mother to her child, "Mommy said not to do that.") Its use in these data appears to complicate David's job of learning verbal agreement, since the grandmother refers to herself in two different ways ("I" or "grandmother"), each requiring a different form of agreement.

<sup>7</sup> It is not entirely clear whether Vovó's utterance at line 09 is a reply to the mother's utterance at line 06 (which, because she is not on the phone at the time, is presumably directed at David), David's reiteration of it (at line 08), or both.

<sup>8</sup> This has led Artigal (1994) to consider the language acquisition process as one involving the "re-making" of meaning. In other words, it is not enough to use a new linguistic form—acquisition is a result of the re-use of the form in some new spatio-temporal context.

<sup>9</sup> This bias is reflected in the preliminary transcription of the phone calls, in which passages such as Excerpt 9 were not transcribed, since they did not involve use of the second language.

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# Sociocultural Theory, Second Language Discourse, and Teaching: An Interview with James Lantolf

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## INTRODUCTION

James Lantolf is a professor in the Department of Modern Languages at Cornell University, and co-editor of the journal *Applied Linguistics*. For the past 15 years or so, he and his students have conducted research on second language acquisition from a Vygotskian perspective. Informing much of this research is an empirical analysis of the discursive practices of second language learners—for instance, the scaffolded interaction that takes place between experts and novices within the zone of proximal development,<sup>1</sup> or the egocentric speech<sup>2</sup> of individuals engaged in tasks performed in second language contexts. From this perspective, the acquisition of any skill (including linguistic competency) is seen not as a static property residing in the head of an individual, but as a dynamic process which resides between or among individuals.

In this interview, Lantolf discusses how he first became interested in the application of sociocultural theory to second language acquisition, and what he sees as the appeal of such theory to studies of second language discourse. He then discusses some current research efforts (including his work in SLA theory construction), and what he sees as the future of discourse-based research—a future in which the now-prevalent distinction between pedagogical theory and practice becomes less pronounced. Finally, he describes an experimental language learning classroom where he hopes to put his beliefs in the dialectical nature of learning to the test.

## THE INTERVIEW

Coughlan: *I guess a good place to start would be for you to describe your academic training and what drew you into the field of applied linguistics and SLA.*

Lantolf: My academic training is in secondary education in Spanish, and in

Spanish linguistics. I did work in historical Spanish linguistics more than 20 years ago, but I didn't really work that long in that area. Being someone who did a lot of language teaching, it was kind of hard not to be intrigued by issues of learning. One of the things that I always used to wonder about was why my students often weren't able to learn, even though my explanations were always linguistically quite sound. Linguistic expertise didn't seem to have the impact on language learning that I was hoping for. So I began to wonder about what was going on. How could the right explanation not have the right result? And so that piqued my interest in language teaching. I think the first or second paper I ever published (Lantolf, 1977) was on the whole issue of change in foreign language teaching. So it was quite early on that I began to have an interest in applied linguistics and language acquisition. I guess my "conversion," if you will, happened when I was on the faculty at the University of Texas at San Antonio from 1977-80. There, I had contact with people like Carolyn Kessler, who was working in bilingualism. I started to talk with her, and I guess that's when I really became interested. By the time I got to Delaware in 1980, I was basically doing work in second language acquisition.

Coughlan: *When did you develop your interest in Vygotsky and sociocultural theory?*

Lantolf: I would say my interest in that began in the early 80's—1982 or 1983, I guess—through my contact with Bill Frawley at Delaware. Bill had studied with Jim Wertsch at Northwestern. I started to talk about second language acquisition and he started to talk about his experiences with sociocultural theory, and we were intrigued by what each other was saying, and wound up teaching a seminar in 1983 on Vygotskian theory. From that point on our work moved in that direction almost exclusively.

Coughlan: *What is it that makes Vygotskian theory so appealing?*

Lantolf: I guess because it asks fundamentally interesting questions, and it compels you to see fundamentally interesting configurations in the world. I know this idea has been abused quite a bit recently, but I think it has a theoretical and a pedagogical side to it, and a practical side to it as well. Although I don't see the separation between theory and practice to the extent that I think some people in the field do. I think the theory/practice dichotomy reflects the reductionist approach that has dominated modern science. At any rate, what I find appealing about Vygotskian theory is that it not only asks interesting questions, but it forces you to do something to help people change. That's what I find to be quite compelling about it. It challenges you to try to do something to help people.

Coughlan: *What specific aspects of sociocultural theory have either you or your students explored?*

Lantolf: What we've been most interested in would be the linguistics of sociocultural theory—in the sense that we've been interested in several aspects, one of which is how is mind organized and reflected by and through the linguistic properties of a language. So we've been looking at things like tense-aspect, and how that reflects people's cognitive organization during problem-solving activities, or what the language that people use on-line can tell us about what's going on in the mind. We've looked at things like modality, we've done some work on the discursive properties of texts, and how people generate texts, and what the linguistic features of that process can itself tell us about how they generate texts. Most recently we've started to get interested in metaphor. Several of my students here [at Cornell] are now working on the acquisition of metaphor—conceptual metaphors—in second languages, and whether or not it's possible to actually acquire conceptual metaphors in a second language to the extent that it leads to conceptual reorganization of your mind.

Coughlan: *And how do you research that question?*

Lantolf: Well, an interesting project is some work that one of my students, Aneta Pavlenko, is doing on the concept of privacy in Anglo-American culture and in Russian culture. (See Pavlenko, 1995). There are all kinds of formal metaphors in English for the concept of privacy—for example, personal space—which apparently do not exist in Russian. There's no way to talk about these properties in Russian. One of the things that she's been interested in is to what extent Russians learning English can acquire the concept of privacy and the associated metaphors that go with it. And then the reverse—to what extent are Americans acquiring Russian able to surrender the metaphor. So she's looking at Russians acquiring English as a foreign language in Russia, Russians acquiring English as a second language in this country, and then the same for Americans acquiring Russian. She's set up a film—it's non-verbal, of course—in which she shows what Americans would interpret to be a violation of people's privacy, and then asks subjects to talk about what they see going on in the film and the results are really quite interesting. The most interesting data so far concerns Russians who have been living in this country and have learned English here—whom she asks to talk about the film in Russian. They have a very hard time because they seem to have acquired the concepts of privacy, and yet when they have to talk about it in Russian they don't have the lexicon to do it.

Coughlan: *So do they code-switch?*



Lantolf: They code-switch or they borrow terms or they make up terms or they extend terms in Russian that would really be semantically inappropriate to try to talk about this idea of privacy. On the other hand, Russians who have learned English in Russia clearly don't see the film as about privacy—they see it as something else.

Coughlan: *What other research are you doing?*

Lantolf: The work that I'm doing right now examines second language acquisition theory and theory building (Lantolf, 1995). I'm basically looking at it from the perspective of metaphor. I'm arguing that—in point of fact—theories are really just metaphors that have become literalized or mythologized, if you will. It basically argues for a relativistic stance within the field, and of course I know that's probably unpopular among some people.

Coughlan: *Could you go into that a little more?*

Lantolf: My argument is that if theories are just metaphors, and metaphors are the ways that we use to think about the world, then in fact there's no one metaphor that's the right metaphor. There are just some metaphors that are more appealing than others, for whatever reasons. And these metaphors serve as a kind of core around which discursive spaces can be built, and scientists can then use them to organize and coordinate their activity. But it doesn't follow that there has to be a privileged metaphor—there are just some that are more appealing than others. Therefore, the more appealing they are—for whatever reason, and not because they're necessarily right—they ultimately achieve the status of theory. If this is the case, then why should we not have multiple metaphors sanctioned in the field of second language acquisition research? Why should there be some privileged theory or set of theories? The argument has been circulating that we need to cull theories because there are just too many of them: my view is that we ought not to do that because we may be culling metaphors that some people might ultimately find appealing. Why should we discard them by some algorithm or whatever principle people want to use for culling them?

Coughlan: *Why do you think it's taken so long for sociocultural theory to develop an audience in the field of second language acquisition?*

Lantolf: That's a good question. My guess is that it's kind of the new kid on the block. I think one of the reasons it's gaining in popularity now is that it's also gaining in popularity in the field of education. If you look even five years ago in the field of education there was not that much sociocultural work being done. I'm not sure if it's the dominant paradigm, but it's really quite strong. So I think that probably has some effect, because a lot of people who are working

in it are people who come into second language acquisition from education. It's not so much people who are trained in straight linguistics that are working within sociocultural theory. I think the other reason is that UG has dominated the theory-building literature to a considerable extent.

But, in general, I don't think you can actually convince someone that your theory is a better theory or the right theory. In my reading of some of the social history of science, one of the ways that a theory gains momentum is by inculcating would-be scientists while they're still students—the kind of discourse they're exposed to will probably affect the way they think and talk about the field. So I think that's one of the reasons that it's taking some time—there's just not a critical mass of people out there who are getting exposure to it during their formative years. By the way, I'm not saying that that's what should happen—I think that you shouldn't be exposed to only one kind of discourse or only one kind of metaphor or only one kind of theory. I think you should have exposure to a pretty wide variety of theories. One of the problems is that people tend to be steeped in a given discursive organization or a given theory or metaphor, and then they assume that that's the only way to view the world. Just as in the case of cultures—you assume that there's only one way to organize the world.

*Coughlan: Well, in spite of what you just said—that you can't convince someone that your theory is a better theory or the right theory—what do you think sociocultural theory has to offer discourse-based studies of language acquisition?*

*Lantolf: I think one of the things that discourse-based theories, including sociocultural theory, has is that it compels us to think in different ways about what language is and about what it is that people are actually learning—or becoming—via the second language. Maybe we ought not to be talking about second language acquisition as if it were some kind of property or some kind of object that you come to possess and have; maybe second language acquisition is simply another way of organizing the world and behaving in the world. I think the problem has been that, in the orthodox view, we assume language acquisition happens inside of people's heads exclusively. And I think the lesson of the discursive research—in particular, sociocultural theory—is that acquisition happens not just exclusively inside of people's heads, but that it's situated and it's distributed. That's a point that I find appealing in the research, and I would hope that people would begin to give some serious consideration to that possibility, rather than taking a more individualistic or solipsistic view of things.*

*Coughlan: Maybe you could give an example from your own work—I'm thinking of some of the work you've done with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development—where acquisition is distributed across interlocutors?*

Lantolf: What the work in the zone of proximal development has shown, and continues to show, is that acquisition is not the sole responsibility of the individual, but is in fact a kind of dialogic or distributed responsibility of the individual and other individuals. The work that we and others have been doing using the metaphor of the zone of proximal development makes a quite interesting and quite forceful case as to how that happens. A couple of years ago, Bill Frawley and I argued that not only acquisition, but *use* of language—what people have called proficiency—is in fact dialogic. We don't carry proficiency around inside of our heads, and we don't have proficiency in the language—we negotiate it. Proficiency is really a property of dialogues, and it's situated just as the learning process is situated. Even within the research concerning the zone of proximal development, I think some people have misconstrued the zone as simply another way of getting what's out there inside the individual. Once it's inside, then you have proficiency. In our view, that's not what it's about—it's always distributed, whether it's learning or whether it's use of the language. It's dialogic.

Coughlan: *Is that similar to Artigal's (1994) claim that acquisition is "the re-making of meaning"?*

Lantolf: I think what he's talking about kind of meshes with what we've been saying about language acquisition—that it's not simply a question of taking in linguistic forms; it's learning how to "mean" in a different way, and how to function in different indexical spaces, and how to define those indexical spaces in different ways. So it's really a question of how to mean, which to my mind is a question of how to organize the world. In acquiring a second language or learning how to mean in a different way, you're learning how to organize the world in different ways.

Coughlan: *What do you see as future directions for sociocultural theory and discourse-based research in SLA?*

Lantolf: To give an example, I think the work that Joan Kelly Hall is doing on the classroom as a discursive space is really quite impressive (Hall, 1995). She's trying to look at how teachers and learners interact and co-construct a discursive space for language learning to happen. She's beginning to pay attention to the "voices" of teachers and learners on-line. And I think that the work that Rick Donato and Pete Brooks are doing on collective scaffolding in the classroom, and the kind of discourse that emerges during that process, is really quite important (e.g., Brooks and Donato, 1995). This is where I see the merging of theory and practice. Some people have pondered the question of whether, when you as a researcher go into a classroom and do this kind of work, you ought to then inform the teacher of what's going on, with the idea of trying to get the teacher



to change the way he or she behaves in the classroom. Some people feel you shouldn't do that, but I think that's what sociocultural theory is about.

Coughlan: *It's a form of action research, then?*

Lantolf: That's what I think. I think it's inappropriate to come to an understanding of what's going on and not inform the teacher of what's going on. I think that's where the theory and practice come together. If you don't do that, I think in a sense you're not really doing sociocultural research.

Coughlan: *Has anyone actually gone back in and worked with teachers based on their findings?*

Lantolf: Last year, at our first sociocultural meeting in Pittsburgh,<sup>3</sup> we had a discussion about this. I remember Joan [Kelley Hall] saying—I'm paraphrasing—that when she was in the classroom taking notes and observing these things, it was all she could do to keep herself from intervening in the classroom at that point. Because she could see what the problem was, how the teacher was in fact deforming the discourse and actually creating a schizophrenic atmosphere. We had quite a heated debate in the group about whether she should have intervened, whether she should have informed the teacher and tried to change the situation or the circumstances.

There were some people at that meeting who were quite opposed to the idea that education is about changing people. They think it's about informing people. To my mind, informing ought to lead to change.

Coughlan: *Do you do any intervention yourself?*

Lantolf: I have tried to do that here at Cornell. It's been sensitive—it's not been easy, because people are resistant, and they see these sorts of findings reported by Joan Kelly Hall as negative. I'm going to teach an experimental course in the Spring semester, by the way. It's an undergraduate Spanish course, and my idea is for the class itself to be a zone of proximal development, rather than a separate zone for each individual in the class. So what I'm going to ask them to do is to develop a class portfolio instead of individual portfolios—they'll have to decide what gets put in the portfolio to reflect what the class is capable of doing. The class as a group will be evaluated, not individuals within the class.

Coughlan: *So everyone in the class will get the same grade?*

Lantolf: Yeah. That's probably going to be controversial at a place like Cornell because it's so competitive and because students are after the grade, but I really think that it's worth trying this kind of collective approach to learning in an environment where the classroom is itself a zone of proximal development. We



don't have a syllabus for the course: it's going to be a syllabus constructed between and among the students and the teachers.

Coughlan: *But you have the external goals of the university to try to meet, right?*

Lantolf: No. Our external goal is simply that they learn something. That they change. And that they, as a class, present evidence of what that change is. But we're not complying with whatever those external goals are—we don't have particularly clear goals, other than proficiency, whatever that means. Our approach to proficiency will be dialogic rather than monologic.

Coughlan: *But it's linguistic change, right? Ultimately you want them to be able to somehow perform better in the second language.*

Lantolf: That's one way of changing. Another way of changing is for them to ultimately think differently about what it is they're doing. Because we want them to study topics they're interested in—things about the university, about their language learning histories, their own fields of study or majors. The idea is not just to measure—or should I say to assess—changes in their abilities in the language, but to evaluate to what extent they as *people* actually change.

Coughlan: *That's radical. What do you think Cornell's reaction to it will be?*

Lantolf: Cornell is a kind of interesting place in that you do have a good deal of academic freedom to do the kinds of things that you think you want to be able to do with your students. It prides itself on that. On the other hand, it does have a conservative side to it, particularly in terms of the traditional approach to language teaching—that people have to be on the same page at the same time. What the reaction will be, I don't know. I don't know if this is going to even be successful, whatever successful means. The students might not show up the second day! Although I tend to doubt it because I think that Cornell students come expecting a different kind of experience, at least on the surface. They may not fully understand what that means. One of the things that we plan to do is to talk about it along the way with the people involved in language teaching here. We hope it will show teachers that they don't all have to be on the same page at the same time. Some teachers here react very strongly for, and others very strongly against, the idea of pedagogical uniformity in language education. Some people can't stand the fact that they are constrained by a syllabus and by a curriculum and by a language program administrator. And there are other people who think that you absolutely have to do that—that equality means doing the same thing at the same time for everybody. And of course the sociocultural view is quite different from that. Equal access does not necessarily mean treating everybody the same.

What we're hoping from this experiment is to have an impact on pedagogy—to show that this can be a good experience for the students, and that there can be development. It may not look like the currently-sanctioned form of development, but there are going to be changes in the students.

Coughlan: *And in the teachers as well, right?*

Lantolf: Yes, in the teachers as well, we hope. I think the problem has been trying to consider alternatives to their current practice—we've only been trying to convince them through argumentation, rather than through showing them what's possible. The idea here is to try to show people that it is possible to change and to develop even though you don't necessarily follow the same rigid curriculum for everybody.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The "zone of proximal development" is a term coined by Vygotsky to distinguish between a learner's actual performance, and his or her potential performance--i.e., that which was possible through assistance by someone of more expert status. Vygotsky believed that such novice-expert interaction gave rise to cognitive development.

<sup>2</sup> In the Vygotskian tradition, it is believed that egocentric speech (i.e., talk to oneself) performs an intrapsychological, rather than an interpsychological (or social), function by helping an individual to organize and conduct cognitive activity--activity first experienced through social interaction.

<sup>3</sup> In 1994, Lantolf organized a conference devoted to sociocultural approaches to second language acquisition in Pittsburgh, PA. A second conference was held in 1995 in Athens, GA.

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*Perspectives on Pedagogical Grammar*, edited by Terence Odlin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 340 pp.

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In the early 1980s, the influence of Krashen's Monitor Theory (see, e.g., Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982) and its practical counterpart, the Natural Approach to language teaching, were strong. These authors, in reaction to one influential strand of earlier pedagogical theory which held that successful L2 learning was predicated on getting learners to master syntactic structures of a target language through conscious awareness and practice of those structures, believed such instruction largely ineffective or even detrimental to the acquisition process and therefore generally useless. What was necessary and sufficient to encourage acquisition was something which was thought to be exactly the opposite: a focus on 'comprehensible input', closely recreating the conditions under which children learn mother tongues.

The reactions to this line of argument ranged from strong objections to the theory itself (see, e.g. Gregg 1984) to objections to the ill-defined Krashenian notion of what it means to 'teach grammar' or 'call attention to form' (Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith 1985), to claims that instruction of some sort actually does seem to work (Long 1983, Yorio 1994), to evidence that 'comprehensible input' by itself is not sufficient (Harley and Swain 1984). Nowhere was it ever demonstrated conclusively that grammar instruction has no positive effects. Since that time, grammar teaching has begun to redefine itself, usually conceding the need for more contextualization. Part of this redefinition involves the search for models, part the search for methods, and part the search for validation.

*Perspectives on Pedagogical Grammar* is a worthwhile collection of articles pursuing these issues. The book is divided into three sections entitled "What Sort of Grammar?", "Grammar, Lexicon, and Discourse", and "Putting Grammar to Work"; in the review I depart somewhat from the actual order of presentation.

The book's first section addresses the nature of rules available for pedagogic use. Vivian Cook's contribution raises the question of the applicability of generative grammar to L2 teaching. While this question has been addressed many times before for older generative models, recent (i.e. post-1981) revisions



in the theory call for a reassessment. The paper offers a brief overview of the principles-and-parameters model together with the L1 evidence bearing on it and then moves to the issue of the availability of UG to L2 learners, taking a generally favorable view of recent research. While Cook expresses the usual skepticism regarding the usefulness of the model for pedagogy, e.g., for the development of instructional materials, he is much more sanguine than other writers in the past about such prospects, primarily since the newer model has resulted in a radically different picture of internalized grammars, "hence any teaching program that utilizes syntax has a new and rich source of ideas to call upon" (P.29). The value lies not so much in student or teacher awareness of UG principles as in the use made of known parameters: if languages differ for the most part on matters of simple parameter setting, a whole host of learning problems might be addressed through awareness of the wide-ranging effects of these settings.

Philip Hubbard, in his paper, invites pedagogues to mine for insights three competing generative alternatives, specifically Relational Grammar (RG), Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), and Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (GPSG). None of these models is given more than a cursory description, but on the positive side, possible advantages and an illustrative application is provided for each. For RG the illustration is with unaccusatives (see discussion of Yip below); for LFG it is the use of thematic roles; for GPSG it is the complex but highly systematic set of verb subcategorizations.

Paul Westney, in "Rules and Pedagogical Grammar", takes a different approach to the issue of grammar teaching as it is commonly understood, and one which falls in more coherently with the critical spirit of the volume as a whole. His article is a mass of caveats to those confident that adequate and accurate rules are readily available to teachers, whether to use for their own edification or to present to their students for conscious mastery, where 'rule' is defined as "observed regularity with predictive value" (74), but where the notion 'grammar' is somewhat less well delineated. While rules of "low-level syntax" are indeed capable of explicit formulation, these rules - which might include plural and possessive marking and gross rules of word order (cf. Rutherford 1980) - are easily learned in principle (if not actually put into use) at the lower levels. When we move to the higher levels, we are faced not only with the question of whether to use 'rules of thumb' (Berman 1979) but also of what these rules of thumb might be and whether they ought to be followed up by something more precise. Yet in many key areas including article use, the some/any distinction, and modal use, it is not clear that such precision is currently available, and if it is available, whether it is amenable to teaching and consequent acquisition: an adequate linguist's rule may not be 'translatable' to a pedagogical one.



While Westney's thesis largely concerns the proper formulation of rules, Odlin claims in his paper that despite the presumed veracity of their source, some of the key data which go into the formulation of any rules are suspect. The paper starts with the uncontroversial observation that NS judgements on the possible sentences of a language are more reliable than those of NNS and that in turn, teacher and linguist judgments (in that order) are more reliable than those of laypeople. Westney then aims at refinement of our conception of this 'introspective hierarchy', illustrating that in some cases at least, disagreements on grammaticality and acceptability vary among NSs, leading to a credibility problem where NNS seek NS judgements.

David Little argues for an approach to pedagogical grammar which emphasizes the lexicon, defending it on communicative and learning principles. A grammar-based syllabus, at the lower levels at least, begins with rules which cannot emerge as psychological equipment until a critical mass of lexis is internalized; a naive lexical approach which focuses on words without reference to their syntactic and semantic associations is difficult to use. Giving a sample pedagogical application, Little shows how students can attempt reconstructions of authentic texts in which lexical properties, especially of verbs, form an integral and communicatively vital part of the lesson. Such lessons approach grammar rules in a quasi-inductive way. He briefly outlines the training which teachers might undergo to utilize such an approach.

An example of an actual lexical approach in use is given in Tim Johns' description of ongoing work at the University of Birmingham, which involves not textual reconstruction but instead the extensive use of computer concordances. Chief underlying motivations for the project are two suspicions, one similar to Westney's about the databases of traditional grammar and vocabulary teaching, which lead to inaccurate descriptions, and the other about their top-down methodology. Johns justifies formal attention to grammar and lexis on the basis of both student interest and in view of the possibilities opened up by the recent development of computer corpora. The result is the possibility of more highly inductive learning and teaching in which learners at the higher levels construct from the data the recurrent frames necessary for mastery of problem areas. The author provides illustrative examples of the utilization of concordances in the Birmingham program.

Russell Tomlin's long contribution offers as a partial solution to overly formal syntactic pedagogy not a lexical but a functional approach to grammar pedagogy. Broadly speaking, the suggestion is that discourse-pragmatic correlates of particular grammatical constructions should be made wherever they are available and well-established. The first problem, and the one which takes up most of the discussion, is the validation issue: how do we determine whether a

particular item is in fact used as part of a (presumably) conscious attempt to achieve some effect beyond the purely informational one and is so used to the same end by other speakers such as to establish a rule of use? The second problem is how, if at all, such relevant conclusions may be put to pedagogical use - whether through explicit instruction by rule, through consciousness-raising activities of some sort, or by another means. The illustrative example used throughout is the foreground-background distinction as it has been argued to be reflected in the main clause-dependent clause distinction.

The paper by Ruqaiya Hasan and Gillian Perrett, as its authors admit, will not be seen primarily as a piece on pedagogical grammar but rather mainly as one on "the social basis of linguistic theory", challenging the common assumption that "grammar is one area of study that can be discussed in convenient isolation from everything else" (P.219). In this respect it is similar to the Tomlin piece but carries with it the intellectual and terminological baggage of Halliday's systemic-functional school of linguistics, of whose assumptions a lengthy synopsis is given. Paramount in this system are the subsystems of the interpersonal, the textual, and the ideational, which are three faces of each linguistic event; it is argued that language as an object cannot be studied fruitfully apart from social context. The example discussed at length, the semantics of modality, is particularly appropriate to advancing their program, since the choice of modals is an area in which social-interpersonal roles play a large part in lexical choice; the authors argue that awareness of social context on the part of the teacher will determine in large part the best way to teach these verbs.

David Nunan's excellent paper expresses reservations about the applicability of acquisition theory to pedagogic practice. In this case the issue in question is what bearing Pienemann's (1985) claims about teachability have on the sequencing of grammatical structures introduced, at least to lower-level students.

As a highly sophisticated readdressing of the issue of natural order of acquisition (see Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982 and earlier studies), Pienemann predicts the futility of trying to override natural sequences in teaching. However uniform these developmental facts may be, Nunan argues that they in no way translate into straightforward instructions for syllabus writing for a number of reasons including (a) the impracticality of omitting so-called advanced structures from input, (b) the fact that certain structures are first learned and used as unanalyzable formulas, and (c) the (not easily testable) possibility that certain structures may benefit from (or even require) a 'gestation period' during which they occur in input but not in output.

The only papers purporting to offer concrete results of any approach to grammar teaching are those by Virginia Yip and Peter Master. Yip reports on

the effect of what she calls a consciousness-raising activity (insofar as it is addressed to a specific problem area) involving the testing of student responses to a correction task on the frames of ergative vs. non-ergative verbs. Such verbs, which occasion grammatical subjects in patient roles (e.g., happen, occur, and many intransitive verbs like roll which have transitive counterparts), tend to be erroneously marked with passive morphology in interlanguage grammars apparently for semantic and/or L1 transfer reasons. The controlled pretest-posttest study shows performance improvement in an experimental group following explicit discussion of the impossibility of certain forms and the possibility of others. Master's paper reports on two more or less identical quasi-experimental studies of English article instruction in which groups of university writing students, some given explicit and systematic instruction on the use of English articles and some not, were compared on pre- and posttests. Instruction was shown to make a difference in student performance, although the qualification is added that the intensity and sequencing of this instruction may have played a key role in outcomes.

There are two major generalizations which come out of this book. The most universally expressed of these is the belief that there is a role for explicit attention to form in language instruction; there is scarcely a trace of Krashenian sentiment here, though there is also no great support for traditional grammar syllabi. The overall tone of the contributions is exploratory and tentative, and the authors are in general forthright about this inconclusiveness. This is a virtue of the book, since there are few if any claims to validation. Some of the arguments for one approach or another are based on illustrative examples which might not generalize well. Will RG, LFG, or GPSG offer us much beyond what Hubbard says they will, and is this very much to begin with? How will awareness of language in social settings help us teach relative clauses or morphology? Are disparate intuitions about acceptability/grammaticality really a pervasive and vexing problem? Certain authors such as Cook, Tomlin and Johns are careful to hedge their bets on their respective arguments. Moreover, the measures of attainment given by Yip and Master do not, unfortunately, rule out the Krashenian claim that what is being measured is the ability to monitor well on an administered posttest rather than the ability to perform with nativelike accuracy in naturalistic production.

Another feature of the book is the recurring theme of the importance of the lexicon as a focus in grammar instruction, as evidenced in around half of the papers. This is an interesting focus which derives its strength from at least two sources. One is current grammatical theory, which in Cook's terms 'minimizes the acquisition of syntax, maximizes the acquisition of vocabulary items with lexical entries for their privileges of occurrence' (P.43). The other is the recent



attention given, largely in conjunction with concordance work such as Johns', to the role of the lexicon in language learning. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) argue that "lexical phrases" take a sort of intermediate place between word and syntax and that they are "form/function composites" (1992:11) which play a central role in L1 acquisition and ought to play a greater one in L2 pedagogy. Lewis (1993), in a highly advocatory work on lexical syllabi, argues that

Language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar. Lexis is the core or heart of language but has always been the Cinderella...language teaching has traditionally developed an unhelpful dichotomy between the generalizable, pattern-generating quality of grammar and the apparently arbitrary nature of individual vocabulary items. The reality of language data is more adequately represented by a Spectrum of Generalizability upon which grammatical or vocabulary items may be placed... (1993:89)

He echoes much the same sentiment as Westney about the inadequacy of traditional rule-formulations and argues for pedagogical activities much like the word-based reconstructions which Little describes.

One can imagine that it will be the second strand of thinking which will be the more influential one for readers of *Perspectives on Pedagogical Grammar*. Whatever the Krashenians have advocated in recent years regarding attention to form, grammar still seems to form an integral part of language-teaching programs and will undoubtedly continue to do so. This volume may aid teachers in the decision of how that grammar is presented, and it will hopefully stimulate research on the relative efficacy of lexically-oriented syllabi.

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***Language Attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa:  
A Sociolinguistic Overview*** by Efurosibina Adegbija.  
Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1994. Pp. viii + 130 pp.

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Language planning has been a primary focus of African sociolinguistics since the formation of independent states three and a half decades ago (Bokamba, 1990). Still, the 'language problem' remains unresolved from one end of the continent to the other. In Ethiopia, where Amharic was imposed as the sole official language and all other languages were suppressed for over 30 years, educators are purging Amharic from the curriculum (Honig, 1994). In South Africa, apartheid promoted ethnic conflict by segregating language groups (Harlech-Jones, 1990), a legacy confronting the new governments as they struggle to create post-apartheid language policy that will foster national unity (Luckett, 1992). In *Language Attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Sociolinguistic Overview*, Adegbija outlines the historical and current sociopolitical factors that make language planning in African nations so complex and contentious. Central to his discussion is the argument for further and more in-depth research on language attitudes.

In the first two chapters, the author provides a basic sociolinguistic profile of Sub-Saharan Africa. He draws most of his examples of language policy and attitudes from Nigeria, his country of origin. From the outset, Adegbija is forthright about his ideological perspective: he supports multilingual policy based on an "asset and resource perspective to diversity" (p. 113).

The third chapter addresses research of the past decade on language attitudes in Africa. This includes a description of some previous studies and their methodological deficiencies, as well as a call for more rigorous research in fields relevant to language planning. By applying Lambert and Gardner's model of motivation to Africans' acquisition of European Languages of Wider Communication, Adegbija raises an intriguing question: how readily can the instrumental drive for upward socioeconomic mobility be separated from the integrative desire to affiliate oneself with the European or the African elite? He thus emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive application of western theories to individuals' language learning in the African context.

The fourth chapter is a plea for the protection of small minority languages against regional Languages of Wider Communication. A more concrete connection between access to resources and competence in prestige languages would have strengthened his argument that language promotion is

necessary for the sociopolitical and economic advancement of advance linguistic minorities. By revealing his own prejudice against the Hausa-speaking majority of Nigeria, Adegbiya illustrates the impact of extra-linguistic factors such as regional or religious conflict on language attitudes and any effort to investigate or influence them.

Most problematic is the fifth chapter, which focuses on language use in education. Adegbiya does not adequately develop his argument for mother tongue instruction, citing as evidence experiments whose results are held by many sociolinguists to be inconclusive (Schmied, 1991). In his demand for government-sponsored development of small minority languages, the author glosses over the need for a cost-benefit analysis of such a policy prior to expending limited state resources.

While far from being comprehensive, *Language Attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa* is an interesting outline of the issues in language attitudes research and language planning in the region. However, rather than assert without adequate evidence that multilingual policy is the key to literacy, socioeconomic equality, democracy, and freedom from neo-colonialism, Adegbiya might do more for his cause by posing more questions that will inspire the research needed to support his claim that, for the greater good, governments must maintain and develop minority languages. "Language development is people development" (p.109), but it may not be the panacea he claims.

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***Second-Language Classroom Interaction: Questions and Answers in ESL Classes*** by Ann C. Wintergerst. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1994. xv + 159.

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This book presents an empirical study of teacher-student interaction in ESL classes, particularly in the area of student responses to teachers' questioning techniques. Data were gathered from six teachers and their twelve ESL classes at an English language institute in New York City during the spring semester of 1985. Three of the classes were beginning-level and the other three were advanced-level. The students included native speakers of Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai, and Turkish. Those whose Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores fell below 400 were placed in beginning-level classes, while those who scored around 500 were placed in advanced-level classes. Except for their language background and TOEFL scores, no other information on the twenty-seven students was available.

Wintergerst begins her book by reviewing research on teachers' talk and question behaviors in (non-ESL) content classrooms and ESL classrooms. She summarizes previous related research and highlights the works of Gamta (1976), Rwakya (1976), Lobman (1979), Shapiro-Skrobe (1982), Hines (1983), and Libdeh (1984). Then the author moves on to the research methodology in her study, and discusses the research setting, subjects, data collection and analysis. The observation system used in the study—Fanselow's (1987) Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings (FOCUS)—plays a major role in the analysis of classroom interaction in terms of the following communication characteristics: source/target, move type, medium, use, and content.

*Source/target* refers to who or what is communicating to whom or what. In a classroom setting, the source and target of communication essentially involve either the teacher or the student. *Move type* refers to the four moves for the pedagogical purpose of communication—structuring, soliciting, responding, and reacting. A structuring move sets the stage for a subsequent activity, e.g., "Alright, we're going to be in this room to help Ann with her tape-recordings." A soliciting move elicits a response to a question, request, or command, e.g., "How old are you?" A responding move answers a question or responds to a request or command, e.g., "I am thirty-seven years old." A reacting move is a reflexive move that is not solicited by others. It can be a comment on what others have communicated, e.g., "Sounds like Raphael had a wonderful party." I



find the label 'reacting move' too general as it can possibly include a responding move too. *Medium* refers to the linguistic, paralinguistic, or non-linguistic element, or silence between the source and the target. *Use* refers to how the medium is used to communicate *content*.

Of the above five communication characteristics, Wintergerst devoted most of her discussion to *move*. Her quantitative findings showed that teachers devoted 7 percent of their total moves to structuring, 56 percent to soliciting, 6 percent to responding, and 32 percent to reacting. There was no structuring move by students. Students solicited 17 percent, responded 67 percent, and reacted 16 percent of the time. The results of the study suggested that students were inclined to use language more and produce more extended responses which were longer and more complex syntactically if teachers solicited with wh-questions (rather than yes/no questions), referential questions or questions to which the speaker did not know the answer (rather than practice or display questions), questions that expected the students to present or answer with a statement of information (rather than with a comment or inference about the information), and questions about the content of special areas or specific subjects (rather than language-related drills). Structuring one activity as opposed to several activities in a discussion lesson also generated extensive student responses and syntactic complexity in their language output. Student responses in content discussion lessons tended to be longer than those in grammar lessons.

The above findings are not very meaningful without substantiating the claim through in-depth presentations of classroom contexts. Although Wintergerst did present a detailed analysis of the extent of students' language output based on the types of questions, her analysis was largely quantitative in nature and was mostly concerned with percentages and frequencies of questions and answers from teachers and students. More qualitative evaluation is needed to complement the quantitative interpretation. The author did acknowledge the fact that qualitative data were not adequately explored in her study. She also suggested that a study with a greater emphasis on contextual factors in a larger variety of classes may reveal even richer findings. As mentioned previously, except for their language background and TOEFL scores, no other ethnographic information on the student participants was investigated. Qualitative investigation of their cultural and personal background may generate insight into the results of the study. For example, the length and complexity of student responses may not have entirely been due to the nature of the questions, but rather the students' cultural and personal background, and their experience and attitude toward learning English.

While the author's claim that a single class activity per discussion lesson as opposed to multiple activities would lead to more responses from students and more complex syntactic structures in their language output, the rate of students' responses and the complexity of syntactic structure in their responses could very well be irrelevant to the number of class activity. The responses could be affected by other factors such as the content of the discussion and the

organization of the activities (e.g., group work vs. pair work vs. individual work).

Another shortcoming of the book is the paucity of excerpts from the various lessons that show actual teacher-student interactions and questions and student responses. It is difficult for the reader to follow the five characteristics of communication (source/target, move, medium, use, and content) and their numerous subcategories outside the context of actual classroom interactions in the form of excerpts. The richness of lessons yielding extended student responses can be best illustrated from excerpts of actual lessons. The author did compensate for this shortcoming by providing examples from actual lessons under each subcategory of communication characteristic in Appendix D. However, more data of this nature are essential for the reader to get a better overall picture of the classroom context.

The gist of the findings in the study is also given in seven appendices, many of them in the forms of tables and diagrams. Most of the quantitative data in the appendices are accompanied by brief descriptions and explanations, which are quite convenient for the reader as a quick reference.

In sum, it is not very clear what Wintergerst is trying to achieve in her book. The objectives of her study are not spelled out clearly in the early chapters. Likewise, a good portion of her concluding section contains a rehash of literature review and lacks clarity as to what exactly is significant about the outcome of her study.

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**English Conversation** by Amy B.M. Tsui. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. xviii+298 pp.

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While work analyzing the structures of conversation has predominantly been carried out under the methodology of Conversation Analysis (hereafter called CA), which seeks to explore the interactional accomplishment of the participants in a particular context as it develops turn-by-turn, Tsui's approach to analyzing conversation in *English Conversation* is one which proposes a descriptive framework for the sequential patterning of conversational utterances. Based on the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model in which interactional coherence is considered at the level of exchange structures, in particular the initiation-response-feedback (I-R-F) exchange, Tsui develops a taxonomy which both classifies utterances and predicts which classifications of utterances can follow others based on an utterance's (1) structural location, (2) prospective classification, and (3) retrospective classification. Throughout the book, Tsui argues that her framework, because it is based on both the sequential patterns of conversation and linguistic features, is more valid and comprehensive than other approaches.

In her Overview (Chapter 1), Tsui discusses two different sets of units of conversational description—*turn*, *pair*, and *sequence*, used in CA, and those which she favors—*act*, *move*, and *exchange*, proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). In her arguments both against the terms used in CA and in favor of the Sinclair and Coulthard terms, Tsui demonstrates some misunderstanding of both frameworks, as well as a lack of understanding that the two approaches to analyzing speech are seeking to answer very different questions.

Tsui's adaptation and expansion of the Sinclair and Coulthard model confuses conversation with formalized institutional talk. The Sinclair/Coulthard model, with its terms *act*, *move*, and *exchange*, was developed to describe classroom interaction, specifically, that classroom interaction which is often referred to as "traditional," in which "the teacher [is] at the front of the class 'teaching', and therefore likely to be exerting the maximum amount of control over the structure of the discourse" (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, p. 6). The overall structure of this type of discourse is vastly different from, and certainly



much more constrained than ordinary conversation, and even other types of classroom interaction.

Tsui argues that the terms *turn* and *sequence* used in CA are invalid because they are not well defined. For example, when Tsui argues that the term *turn*, while an easily identifiable unit, is not well-defined, and gives as her reason that in any one turn, a speaker may "do" more than one thing, she is imposing a speech-act-y definition on a term for which CA not only makes no claims of how many things are "done" within that turn, but often points out that very fact (e.g., Schegloff, *frth.*). Tsui's strongest objection is with the term *sequence*—she states that sometimes a sequence is actually a pair, while at other times it is actually made up of three or four turns. But again, a sequence in CA is not defined by the number of turns of which it is constructed, but rather by the interactional achievement accomplished by the participants.

Based as Tsui's taxonomy is, on the three-part exchange structure of Initiation-Response-Followup, Tsui devotes all of Chapter 2 to elaborating her dissatisfaction with the CA term pair, and argues, instead, that the basic unit of discourse is a three-part unit. Clearly, Tsui does not understand what is meant in CA by the term *adjacency pair*; while an *adjacency pair* is considered to be a basic unit of discourse, there is no claim made that all utterances are part of such a pair. Tsui seems to be considering only minimal, two-turn *adjacency pair* sequences, and is overlooking entirely the sizable literature which discusses the various expansions of *adjacency pairs* (Sacks, 1992 [1972]; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Schegloff, 1988; Schegloff, 1990; Schegloff, 1992; Schegloff, *in process*), which can occur in a variety of positions: "preexpansion before the first part of the pair, insert expansion between the first and second, and postexpansion after the second pair part" (Schegloff, 1990, p. 59). In this literature it is demonstrated that a great number of turns may occur, all of which are built around a single *adjacency pair*.

Rather, building on Berry's (1981) claim that a third part is obligatory in some types of exchanges, Tsui states that some type of follow-up, either verbal or non-verbal, is the norm (for all discourse), thus making a three-part exchange the fundamental conversational unit. To make her argument, Tsui offers examples of conversational data, some of which are invented, and some of which are naturally-occurring. However, it must be pointed out that a number of the naturally-occurring data are taken from Sinclair/Coulthard, and are thus examples of institutionalized, classroom discourse. Nonetheless, if we adopt the view that the three-part unit is indeed the "basic unit," then we must have an explanation for the noticeably-lacking third part from those two-part sequences (of which there are plenty) which are found in naturally-occurring data. Unfortunately, Tsui offers no such explanation. However, if we adopt the view that the two-part unit



is the "basic unit," then the third part is accounted for by adjacency pair expansions (Schegloff, in process).

At any rate, Tsui builds her taxonomy on the three-part unit, and, after a brief outline of the taxonomy in Chapter 3, she develops her framework in great detail over the next 6 chapters. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 explicate the Initiating acts of *elicitation*, *requestive*, *directive*, and *informative*, respectively. Each of these subclasses of Initiating Act contains a number of (sub?)-subclasses; for example, *elicitation* contains *inform*, *confirm*, *agree*, *commit*, *repeat*, and *clarify*.

Tsui's classification of Initiating acts are the most detailed and clear-cut in her taxonomy. In these chapters, she argues against some of the other approaches for classifying these discourse acts, for example, the study of questions by Quirk, et al., (1972, 1985), which divides questions into the following three categories: yes/no, WH-, and alternative. Through examples (again, some naturally-occurring and some invented), Tsui shows that her subclasses more thoroughly cover the range of possibilities in various conversational situations.

Chapter 8 details the subclasses of Responding acts, which Tsui first categorizes into the three main subclasses of *positive*, *negative*, and *temporization*. Further categorizations are made of each of these subclasses, depending on the type of initiation the response follows. Basically, a positive response does what the initiation requires—if the Initiation were an *elicit:confirm*, then a positive response to such an initiation would provide the confirmation sought. A negative response is one which in some way challenges the pragmatic presuppositions of the initiation; for example, the respondent may not have the information required to confirm the initiation. A temporization is a response which in some way puts off both positive and negative responses until some later time. While the classifications of initiation acts seem quite thorough, once we have confined ourselves to a finite set of initiation acts, the responding acts which follow must be even more constrained. Consequently, the categories of responses do not seem to cover as thoroughly all of the possibilities which can, and do, occur in conversation.

In Chapter 9, Tsui develops the subclasses of the third move, the Followup.

She divides these acts into only three subclasses, with no further division beyond that level. According to Tsui, an *endorsement* follows a positive response, a *concession* follows a negative response and the third category, *acknowledgement*, is a cross subclass which can follow all three subclasses of response. A second followup act may occur, in a position subsequent to the first followup, but this will consist solely of an acknowledgement token such as *yeah*, *okay*, or *alright*; this second followup is seen as a turn-passing act. Again, given a finite set of initiations, and a smaller set of responses, we end up with a very small and restricted set of followups.

In Chapter 10, after applying the framework to an actual telephone call, and detailing the "systems of choices" available, and the choices actually made at each turn of the call, Tsui turns her attention to some of the shortcomings of her taxonomy. She gives examples of naturally-occurring conversation which operate beyond the exchange level, such as openings, pre-closings, insertions sequences, and sequence-final follow-up moves. Tsui states, "In order to account for the structural function of this kind of utterance, we need to look at the structure of the unit above the exchange, possibly a *sequence* [emphasis added]" (p. 243). With this one statement, Tsui deconstructs her entire framework, for she not only points out its inability to account for a number of common conversational practices, but she also proposes the very term which she describes as the "least well-defined" in CA as the one which may, after all, be appropriate to describe conversational interaction.

While Tsui's approach to integrating linguistic features, discourse functions, and the sequential aspects of conversation is an heroic effort, and her reasoning for the inadequacy of other attempts to categorize utterance types as discourse acts is often sound, *English Conversation* perhaps tries to do too much. A framework such as this has definite applications for describing the systems of choices in very particular institutional contexts, such as the so-called traditional classroom setting for which the Sinclair/Coulthard model was designed. However, the application of this kind of formalism to a wide variety of contexts, both institutional and "ordinary," seems to lose sight of the social relations and the ways in which the participants show their orientation to the context in which they are interacting.

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